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## ADMIRAL VERNON AND THE NAVY

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## NAPOLEON'S LAST VOYAGES.

Being the Diaries of Admiral Sir THOMAS USHER, R.N., K.C.B.  
(on board the *Undaunted*) and JOHN R. GLOVER, Secretary to  
Rear-Admiral Cockburn (on board the *Northumberland*).

New Edition, with Introduction and Notes by  
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"Napoleonic Studies," &c. Illustrated.

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ADMIRAL VERNON.

From the Painting by Gainsborough in the National Portrait Gallery.

[*Frontispiece.*

# ADMIRAL VERNON AND THE NAVY

A MEMOIR AND VINDICATION

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE ADMIRAL'S CAREER AT  
SEA AND IN PARLIAMENT, WITH SIDELIGHTS ON  
THE POLITICAL CONDUCT OF SIR ROBERT WALPOLE  
AND HIS COLLEAGUES, AND A CRITICAL REPLY TO  
SMOLLETT AND OTHER HISTORIANS

BY

DOUGLAS FORD

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LONDON : T. FISHER UNWIN  
ADELPHI TERRACE • MCMVII

“Ver-non semper viret.”—*The Vernon Motto*

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DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION,  
TO  
ADMIRAL THE HON. SIR EDMUND R. FREMANTLE,  
G.C.B., C.M.G. (REAR-ADMIRAL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM),  
THE STRENUOUS ADVOCATE  
OF  
A STRONG NAVY

1005332



## INTRODUCTION

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CERTAIN historians, from Tobias Smollett downwards, have done scant justice to the subject of this memoir, and even the origin of the nickname "OLD GROG" has been misrepresented. So far as the author of "Roderick Random" is concerned, possible reasons for his prejudice may be found in the present narrative. But, apart from Sir Robert Walpole and his colleagues, most of Vernon's contemporaries honoured him as an upright man and brave and able officer. Walpole, who held that "every man had his price," found in OLD GROG an inconvenient exception to his cynical summary. He hated him accordingly, and his political henchmen followed suit.

Westminster Abbey contains a tribute in stone to the Admiral's character and services. In H.M.S. *Vernon* (the Torpedo School in Portsmouth Harbour) the Royal Navy retains a special memorial of its own. But it is believed that those who read these pages will find yet further evidence of Vernon's right to be ever

held in honoured memory. In his own day political opponents used him and abused him. Englishmen of the present generation, especially those who concern themselves with the splendid history of the British Navy, may be glad to do him justice.

In the United States of America Vernon's untiring and gallant services to the West Indies, and therefore to the mainland colonies, met with cordial recognition. In many respects he received from the old colonists far greater justice than has been done to him in England. It may be said, indeed, that even to this day his best memorial is to be found among the American people, who in Mount Vernon, their national hero's home and burial-place, possess a notable reminder of the old Admiral's services.

At Mount Vernon, as recently as 1904, the Archbishop of Canterbury planted a tree, on the occasion of his visit to the United States.

The present memoir has been restricted mainly to Admiral Vernon's life in relation to the Navy, and in the setting of national events, but cordial thanks are due to Mr. B. Wentworth Vernon, R.N., of Stoke Bruerne Park, Northants, for the family *data* he has kindly made available.

It has been found impracticable to include in the present volume anything but the briefest reference to other distinguished members of the Vernon family. Want of space, not want of material, must be the author's excuse. The Right Hon. James Vernon (the

Admiral's father) had a long and interesting career. Born in the reign of Charles I., he died in that of George I., and therefore saw upon the throne of England six sovereigns in succession, besides that sovereign in all but name, the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell. For about five years he acted as private secretary to "King Monmouth." He served, in the same capacity the famous Duke of Shrewsbury, and held other offices which kept him in touch with the inner history of the times before he attained ministerial rank as Secretary of State to William III. Such a career calls for an independent memoir, and the present writer hopes that his pen may yet complete it. The Vernon correspondence (the value of which was acknowledged by Lord Macaulay) is voluminous and varied. James Vernon exhibited literary qualities which are not to be found in the letters of his son, as set out in the appendix to the present memoir. The Admiral was a fighting man, a hard hitter, indifferent to the graces of style in his correspondence, and not particular about punctuation. Some of his letters to the Admiralty are rather suggestive of a furious discharge of shrapnel.

Of James Vernon's elder brother, Francis (traveller and linguist), no account can be given in the following pages, though his adventures were extremely interesting. He was murdered in Persia, as the result of a trumpery dispute over a penknife.

Admiral Sir Edward Vernon, "Old Grog's" name-

sake, belonged to a later period. He commanded the *Barfleur* in 1773, and was knighted by George III.

At the present time the question of naval discipline is very much in evidence. Critics in Parliament and in the Press have had a great deal to say in condemnation of the "On the knee" order given by Lieutenant Collard. Perhaps they may find something to interest them in those pages of the present memoir which refer to the discipline and mutinies of the eighteenth century.

6, GORDON PLACE, W.C.

*New Year's Day, 1907.*

# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
Norman ancestry—Sir Ralph Vernon—Secretary James Vernon, the Admiral's father—A Westminster election—Edward Vernon at Westminster School—The Navy under the Stuarts—Under William III.—The Headmaster of Westminster—Famous Westminster scholars—Scholastic discipline—Sir Roger de Coverley's tribute to Dr. Busby—James Vernon's comment on Busby's will . . . .	I

## CHAPTER II

A naval retrospect—Bantry Bay—Battle of Beachy Head—Lord Torrington disgraced—British victory in battle of La Hogue—Edward Vernon among the sailors—Nicknamed "The Admiral"—"Coached" by Sir Isaac Newton—London in Vernon's boyhood—The City and the Navy—Covent Garden and its associations—Evelyn and Pepys at Portsmouth—Corruption at the Admiralty—Jack ashore—Vernon enters the Navy—The ordeal of a midshipman . . . .	II
--	----

## CHAPTER III

After La Hogue—"Honest Benbow"—Death of William III.—Queen Anne—Her Lord High Admiral—Battle of Vigo Bay—Vernon's baptism of fire—Thackeray's account in "Esmond"—Results of the victory—Maritime trade in time of war—Vernon present at capture of Gibraltar—Services of the Marines—Vernon in the battle of Malaga—Admiral Rooke's political enemies—Patriotic addresses to Queen Anne—Rooke's retirement and death—Vernon and other officers receive royal rewards . . . .	30
---	----

## CHAPTER IV

PAGE

Peter the Great and the Navy—Speech when self-made a Vice-Admiral—Vernon serves in the Baltic—Protection of shipping—Blockading the Russian ports—Further service under Sir Cloudesley Shovel—The etiquette of the Flag—British sovereignty of the sea—Van Tromp and the Union Jack—Treaty with the Dutch—Admirals' flags in Vernon's time—Sailing ships in action—Difficulty in manning our ships—The great storm of 1703—Vernon shipwrecked with Sir Cloudesley Shovel in the storm of 1707—Honour paid to the Admiral's memory—Sir John Leake—Defoe's naval project—The press-gang and the law—Renewed trouble in the West Indies—Government employment of Captain Kidd—Kidd's piracies—Parliamentary attack on the King and his Ministers—Kidd at the Bar of the House of Commons—Kidd convicted at the Old Bailey and hanged—France and our American Colonies—French attack defeated at Charlestown—Commodore Wager's expedition—Spanish treasure-ships—Vernon appointed captain of the *Fersey*—Makes important captures—Proclamation of peace—Naval scandals in 1711—Bishop Burnet as critic—Dean Swift on our bargain with Portugal—Death of Queen Anne . . . . .

59

## CHAPTER V

King George I. arrives in England—the "Maypole" and the "Elephant"—Dean Swift and his friends out of favour—£100,000 offered for the apprehension of the Pretender—A schoolmaster flogged—A futile fleet in the North—Captain Vernon and the expedition to the Baltic—The Czar as admiral—Captain Delgarno and the pirate ship—Quarrel with Sweden—Byng's squadron in the Mediterranean—Fight off Cape Passaro—Spanish ships captured by Captain Walton—Spain retaliates—Intended invasion of Britain—The Quadruple Alliance—Russia's oppression of the Swedes—British squadron sent to the Baltic—Vernon commands a fifty-gun ship—Pirate squadron in the West Indies—Successful stratagem of Captain Ogle—Fifty-two pirates executed—Captain Vernon enters Parliament—Effect of the South Sea Bubble—Law and the



# CONTENTS

XV

	PAGE
Mississippi Scheme—The Navy debt—The way the money went—Peculation in high places—The King spends six months in Hanover—His Majesty asks for more seamen—Naval demonstration against Russia—Spaniards besiege Gibraltar—Death of George I. . . . .	94

## CHAPTER VI

Captain Vernon re-elected for Penryn—Serves before Gibraltar under Sir Charles Wager—Vote towards the debt for seamen's wages—Royal names for royal ships—Proposal for registration of seamen—Spanish attacks upon British shipping—Vernon and Sir Robert Walpole—Fleet assembled—A patched-up peace—Inquiry into naval finances refused by Ministers—England and Spain—A farcical subsidy—Convention of Prado—British captain mutilated by Spaniards—Excitement in England—Vernon's speeches in the House—Treaties and trade—Spain claims a British colony—Figures and fleets—Conference at the Admiralty—Parliamentary Reports in embryo—Vernon and the people—Walpole's sinister revenge—Vernon's advocacy of warlike measures—Appointed Vice-Admiral of the Blue—Received by the King—Squadron placed under his command—No marines on board—The Admiral's troops—A Ministry of mean expedients—Squadron reaches Jamaica—The King and the nation—His Majesty's quarrel with the Prince of Wales . . . . .	110
--	-----

## CHAPTER VII

Strength of Porto-Bello—Arrival of British Fleet—Attack opened—Town captured—Terms of capitulation—Vernon removes guns and destroys fortifications—Address in Parliament—Rejoicings in England—Lord Chesterfield's tribute to Vernon—Walpole's position—Debates in Parliament—Defeat of the Ministry—Was Walpole a traitor?—Vernon's success the cause of his fall—Auxiliary fleet sails to join the Admiral—Death of the Military Commander—Dangers from hostile fleets . . . . .	132
--	-----

## CHAPTER VIII

PAGE

Admiral Vernon bombards Carthagea—Forts silenced and troops landed—Spanish flag-ship captured—Failure of General Wentworth's operations—Sickness among the troops—Story of the siege in "Roderick Random"—What the fleet accomplished—Hospital ships of the period—Sufferings of the men—Lines by Thomson in "The Seasons"—Lawrence Washington serves under Vernon—George Washington contemplates entering the Royal Navy—His estate named "Mount Vernon" in honour of the Admiral—[Tree planted there by Archbishop of Canterbury in 1904]—Return of the fleet to Jamaica—Plan for attacking Cuba—Troops landed to surprise Santiago—Wentworth fails—Vernon's captures—Return to England—Reception at Bristol—Receives the Freedom of the City of London—Takes his seat in House of Commons as member for Ipswich . . . . . 152

## CHAPTER IX

Vernon's association with Portsmouth—Episodes in the history of the naval capital—Henry VIII. and the *Marye Rose*—The wreck of the *Royal George*—Murder of the Duke of Buckingham—Honours paid to Charles I.—Siege, and entry of the Cromwellians—Marriage of Charles II.—The Duchess of Portsmouth—Visit of William III. to Portsmouth—Pepys at Portsmouth—Old Portsmouth inns—Scene of Nelson's last embarkation—The fleet intended to support Admiral Vernon in 1740—James Wolfe to join the expedition—Wolfe's letters from Portsmouth—His opinion of the inhabitants—Sailors and soldiers of the period—Wolfe's final embarkation—The *Royal William* brings his body back to Portsmouth—Other naval functions at Portsmouth and Spithead . . . . . 176

## CHAPTER X

Vernon completes forty years' service—The Admiralty ask his advice on the manning and arming of the Navy—His trenchant criticism—"My Lords" resent his candour—Unjust removal of his name from Navy List—He

# CONTENTS

xvii

PAGE

blames Lord Winchelsea—On change of Government he is reinstated—Gazetted Admiral of the White—Recalled to active service when England threatened with invasion—Hoists his flag at Portsmouth [where H.M.S. *Vernon* still commemorates him]—The young Pretender puts to sea—H.M.S. *Lion* attacks the convoy—Jacobite force in the North—Retreat from Derby and defeat at Culloden—How Vernon checkmated the French in the Channel—Rodney's early achievement—The Kentish smugglers—Vernon hunted out of his command—Entick's tribute to his services—Horace Walpole's reluctant praise—Disparagement by other critics—Our defenceless coast in 1745—Vernon's letter to the Duke of Bedford—Why the sailors nicknamed the Admiral "Old Grog" . . . 198

## CHAPTER XI

Scare of invasion in 1755—France rides the high horse—England's reply—Captain Cockburn's gallant exploits—Hessians in England again—Uniform of the period—French designs on Minorca—Byng's failure—Surrender of British garrison—Indignation in England—Feeling against Byng—Lampoons and epigrams—Memorable court martial—The question at issue—Stern requirements of the law—Naval discipline in ancient times—The law codified in George II.'s reign—Byng recommended to mercy—Proceedings in Parliament—Sentence of death confirmed—The Admiral's courage at the last—Executed on the *Monarque* in Portsmouth harbour . . . 219

## CHAPTER XII

Court-martial law under the Georges—Debates in Parliament—Part taken by Vernon and other naval officers—General Wolfe's criticism of the failure of the fleet off Minorca—Jingoes of the period—Dearth of able commanders on sea and land—"Old Blakeney"—Walpole on the generals—Lord Loudoun—"Popgun" Hopson—"Hangman" Hawley—Made Governor of Portsmouth—Rise of Wolfe and Howe—Political appointments in the Navy—Trumped-up charge against Admiral Keppel—Popular feeling against

	PAGE
Admiral Palliser — His flight from Portsmouth — The London mob in Pall Mall—Charles Fox on the scene—Honours for Keppel—Court resentment against him	235

### CHAPTER XIII

Misrepresentation of the Admiral's conduct—He demonstrates the truth by means of pamphlets—His criticism of the press-gang system—Condemns the treatment of British sailors—The old Navigation Acts—Results of Free Trade—Old-age pensions for seamen—Mutinies in the fleet—Smugglers of the period — Churchwardens as naval auxiliaries—" A Specimen of Naked Truth"—Resentment of the Admiralty—Summoned to attend before the Board—Unfair removal of his name from list of flag officers—Historical criticism and critics—His popularity undiminished—Active in the House of Commons—Receives Freedom of the City of Edinburgh—Death of Admiral Vernon—Monument placed by his nephew, Lord Orwell, in Westminster Abbey	247
--	-----

APPENDIX	286
----------	-----

INDEX	309
-------	-----

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

---

ADMIRAL VERNON . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
From a Painting by Gainsborough in the National Portrait Gallery.	
DR. BUSBY . . . . .	<i>To face page 7</i>
From a Painting in the National Portrait Gallery.	
JOSEPH ADDISON . . . . .	„ 21
From an old Magazine.	
ADMIRAL SIR GEORGE ROOKE . . . . .	„ 57
From a Painting attributed to Michael Dahl in the National Portrait Gallery.	
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ANNE . . . . .	„ 36
From a Painting by John Closterman in the National Portrait Gallery.	
MEETING OF A COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AT THE FLEET PRISON, 1729 . . . . .	„ 112
From a Painting by Hogarth in the National Portrait Gallery.	
KING GEORGE II. . . . .	„ 130
From a Painting by Thomas Worlidge in the National Portrait Gallery.	
BRITISH PRISONERS AT CARTHAGENA . . . . .	„ 153
From an old Magazine.	
TOBIAS SMOLLETT, M.D. . . . .	„ 161
From a Painting by an Italian Artist in the National Portrait Gallery.	

## xx ADMIRAL VERNON AND THE NAVY

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE . . . . .	<i>To face page</i>	174
From a Painting by J. B. van Loo in the National Portrait Gallery.		
SAMUEL PEPYS . . . . .	„	184
From a Painting by John Hayle in the National Portrait Gallery.		
LAUNCH OF H.M.S. "PRINCE OF WALES" . . . . .	„	195
From an old Magazine.		
THE "LITTLE" GEORGE (ROYAL YACHT) . . . . .	„	197
From a Photograph by West & Son, Southsea.		
HEROES OF "THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE" . . . . .	„	243
From an old Magazine.		
THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD . . . . .	„	283
From a Painting by Hoare.		

# Admiral Vernon and the Navy



## CHAPTER I

Norman ancestry—Sir Ralph Vernon—Secretary James Vernon the Admiral's father—A Westminster election—Edward Vernon at Westminster School—The Navy under the Stuarts—Under William III.—The Headmaster of Westminster—Famous Westminster scholars—Scholastic discipline—Sir Roger de Coverley's tribute to Dr. Busby—James Vernon's comment on Busby's will.

THE Right Honourable James Vernon—the father of “Old Grog”—lived in stirring times. Born in 1643, he was but a year old when Cromwell fought and won the battle of Marston Moor, earning for his wonderful cavalry the name of Ironsides.

The Vernons' family-tree had its undoubted roots in the soil of Normandy. They owed to Royal favour many manors and broad acres—including the famous Haddon Hall, associated with the romance of Dorothy Vernon and Sir John Manners. James Vernon himself belonged to the branch of the family tracing its



descent from Ralph Vernon, of Haslington, born in 1494, who was ninth in descent from Sir Ralph Vernon. Sir Ralph married a daughter of the Lord Dacres, and, according to family records, attained the remarkable patriarchal age of *sevenscore* years and ten! <sup>1</sup>

James Vernon married a daughter of Sir John Buck, a Lincolnshire baronet. The second son of this marriage, Edward Vernon, the subject of this memoir, was born at Westminster on the 12th of November, 1684.

At the time of his father's election as member for Westminster young Edward Vernon, a lad of fourteen, was a scholar at Westminster School, where he remained for a period of seven years. It is easy to believe that he and his schoolfellows took the keenest interest in the political battle in which the elder Vernon was victorious. Himself destined to become a prominent member of the House of Commons, under the shadow of which he lived, the boy, as his father's son, must have had exceptional opportunities of hearing about the Parliamentary events and world-wide interests that marked the reign of William III.

Especially interesting to the future admiral must have been the great debates which concerned the maintenance of the Army and the Fleet. When Secretary Vernon was a young man of thirty, Samuel Pepys, then Secretary to the Admiralty, was writing his "Diary." Vernon, senior, knew nothing of what Mr. Pepys was jotting down in that fascinating record con-

<sup>1</sup> See Genealogical Table of the Vernon family.



# THE VERNON FAMILY.

## Arms of Vernon of Burlington, (*Harl. MSS. 1535.*)

ARMS—Or, on a fesse vert, 3 garbs of the first.  
 CREST—A demi female robed vert, crined or, holding in the sinister arm a garb or,  
 and in the dexter arm a reaping sickle.  
 MOTTO—Ver-non semper viret.

RALPH VERNON, of Haslington, born 1494, = ISABELLA, daughter of son and heir of Richard. This Ralph was sixth in descent from Sir Ralph Vernon, (who lived to be 150), by Maria, daughter of the Lord Daerres. About 1526. See Inq. P. M. 15 Henry VIII., 1523/4. That Ralph died 1523, and Robert was his son and heir.

CECILIA, daughter of Robert Foulhurst, of Crew, co. Chester.

RALPH VERNON, 2nd son. = ELIZABETH, sister to Sir Thomas Moreton, of Wilbrihton, co. Stafford.

DOROTHY, daughter of Sir Thomas Vernon, Knt., of Haslington. See Inq. P. M. 17 James I., 1619/20. That he died seized of Haslington, Wyncley, Gylmanger, Okchunger, Woodside, &c. and that George was his son and heir, and aged 40 and upwards.

FRANCIS VERNON, = A Dutch Lady, of London.

ALICE, daughter of Sir George Vernon, Knt., of=2nd. JANE, a daughter of of Durham Massey, co. Chester. Born 1579. A Richard Corbet, of Stoke. Died 1623, and buried at Bowden, co. Chester. Judge of Common Pleas in 1631. Ob. S. P. Died 16 Charles I., 1643.

FRANCIS VERNON, = ANNE, daughter of son and heir. Smithes, an Allenman of London.

MURIEL VERNON, only daughter and sole heir. She married, in 1833, Henry Vernon, of Sudebury and Hilton, from whom Lord Vernon and the Vernons of Hilton descend.

1. JAMES VERNON, died young.
2. FRANCIS, killed in Persia, S. P.
3. DAVID, blown up in the ship "Loyal London," S. P.
4. HENRY VERNON, a minister in Sussex.
1. SUSAN VERNON,
2. DOROTHY VERNON,
3. ELIZABETH VERNON,

Right Hon. JAMES VERNON, = MARY, daughter of Sir John Buck, Bart., of Hambly Grange, co. Lincoln. 5th son, born 1643. Principal Secretary of State to King William III. in 1697. Died 31st January, 1727. Aet. 84. Buried at Watford.

THEODOSIA VERNON, died 15th February, 1729, unmarried.

MARY VERNON, = Michael Harrison Esq., Muster-Master-General to the troops in Ireland. (Married 28th October, 1728). Michael Harrison was grandson of Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor.

FRANCIS VERNON, 3rd son. S. P.

ARETHUSA, m. 2nd. = JAMES VERNON, eldest daughter of Earl Berkeley. Ob. S. P. co. Suffolk. (See Chaucery's Herefordshire).

CHARLES VERNON, Captain, in the Coldstream Guards, in 1753. General, 1783. Lt-Governor of the Tower 1799. Ob. 1810. Senior General in the army.

FRANCIS VERNON, 2nd son, b. 1715. = ALICE, daughter of Samuel created Baron Orville of Newry, co. Down, by patent, 7th April, 1763; Viscount in 1776; Earl of Shipbrooke, 1777. He died 15th October, 1783, aet. 68. Buried at Nacton. Had three sons, EDWARD, GEORGE, FRANCIS; 920 all died in infancy.

HENRY VERNON, eldest son of Great Thurlow, co. Lincoln, and died S. P. Ob. December, 1776.

JOHN VERNON, of Wharfedale Lodge, co. Suffolk. Ob. at Brighton, 24th May, 1818. S. P. He was many years Colonel of the 1st East Suffolk Militia.

Ambrose EDWARD VERNON, 2nd son = SARAH, daughter of Thomas Best, of Nacton, co. Suffolk. Born 12th November, 1684. Took Porto Bello, 1739; many years M.P. for Ipswich. Died 30th Oct. 1757, aet. 73. Buried at Nacton.

JAMES VERNON, died 1753, aet. 33, unmarried. Buried at St. Andrew's, Plymouth.

THOMAS VERNON, 2nd son, died in August, 1742, unmarried.

EDWARD VERNON, 3rd son, died 24th October, 1740, of small pox, unmarried.

cerning the naval affairs of the kingdom ; but from sources open to his contemporaries he must have heard much that he afterwards communicated to his son. The condition of the naval service had been the subject of a scathing official report, presented by Pepys to Charles II. in 1684—the very year of young Edward Vernon's birth.

Worthless ships were commanded by incompetent officers. Many of them knew less of their business than Monk, who, when he wanted his ship to change her course, excited the laughter of his sailors by calling out the military order, "Wheel to the left." War vessels and seamen's lives—to say nothing of the honour of the Flag—were entrusted to favourites of Charles, or to *protégés* of his mistresses. It was the incompetency of the captains that necessitated the introduction of "masters," who at least knew something of the laws of navigation. Among the seamen themselves was grand material, mostly wasted. From their ranks, however, came some of our worthiest commanders, such as Sir Christopher Minns, who began sea-service as a cabin-boy ; Sir John Narborough, who climbed from the same humble position ; and Sir Cloudesley Shovel.

According to Lord Macaulay, Shovel, who had especial influence on Edward Vernon's career, was Narborough's cabin-boy, but the statement must be erroneous. When Shovel abandoned shoemaking and went to sea, it was under Minns that he found employ-

ment. It was as an able seaman that he first served under Narborough. He could hardly have been his cabin-boy, for he was twenty-four years of age when his commander entrusted him with a message to the Bey of Tripoli. Cloudesley Shovel was then a lieutenant. Moreover, in later years he married Narborough's widow.

Speaking of naval officers of that earlier period, the historian tersely sums up the situation by saying :—

“There were gentlemen, and there were seamen in the Navy of Charles II., but the seamen were not gentlemen, and the gentlemen were not seamen.”

In the Navy under William there were signs of better things, or at least of a genuine desire to bring them to pass. In 1698, the number of seamen of the Royal Navy was fixed at ten thousand, which, at that time of peace, was regarded as a great and powerful force. At some of the Parliamentary debates of 1698 the future captor of Porto-Bello very probably may have been present. One may imagine the interest with which such a lad would have seen the gallant Sir George Rooke rise to speak upon the subject of the Navy. It may be, indeed, that young Vernon witnessed what must have been a memorable scene five years earlier, when Rooke, too ill to stand, was carried in a chair to the bar of the House of Commons to give evidence concerning the disastrous naval events of 1693. The boy certainly must have known of the

gallant part that Rooke had played in the victory of La Hogue in 1692, for the news of that battle had sent London and all England into wild excitement. And there were scenes of sadness, not less memorable than the rejoicings of the populace, the blaze of bonfires, and clangour of the bells, for many a brave British sailor had perished in that hard-fought fight.

It was rumoured at an earlier period that the Jacobites had corrupted several of the English commanders, Admiral Carter being mentioned in particular. The assertion was that he had received £10,000 to bring over his division to the enemy. This scandalous imputation was discredited both by the Government and by Carter's brother officers.

Before the action, Admiral Russell, who was in chief command, visited all his ships and exhorted every crew. "If your commanders play false," he said, "overboard with them, and with me first." The action that followed is the best answer to the slander. Carter, indeed, was the first who broke the French line. Struck by a splinter, he fell mortally wounded on the deck, but firmly refused to be carried below. "Fight the ship," he said, with his failing breath, "fight the ship, as long as she can swim."

At Portsmouth, when the Fleet returned, and with every mark of pomp and circumstance, the remains of the dauntless officer were laid to rest. England, rejoicing in victory, rewarded the surviving seamen of the Fleet by a distribution of nearly £50,000.





DR. BUSBY.

From a Painting in the National Portrait Gallery.

[To face p. 7.



The King himself visited Portsmouth and knighted Admiral Rooke, who, it may be added, a few years later was chosen member for the borough.

How strongly such events must have appealed to the imagination of a boy like Edward Vernon! He was always in the midst of the movement. All the leading figures on the Parliamentary stage must have been familiar to him. The gossip of Westminster Hall, the rumour of the lobbies, and the trials in the Court of King's Bench can hardly have failed to afford endless interest to a family so closely in touch with the inner circle of the political and social life of the period.

Meanwhile the boy's education was proceeding at Westminster School. He came under the rule of the famous Dr. Busby, whose long headmastership, however, was drawing to a close. Busby himself had been educated where now he taught. He was a remarkable man—as ready with his tongue as with his birch. Many good stories were told of him, and perhaps the best were not the truest. One may receive with honest doubt the account of his walking with head covered in the presence of Charles II., for the avowed reason that he could not allow his scholars to suppose that the King himself was a greater man than the headmaster of Westminster School. Yet, though a little man, undoubtedly he had a big spirit. “Will you permit me, giant, to pass to my seat?” said an Irishman, addressing the little doctor in a coffee-house. “Cer-

tainly, pigmy," was the prompt reply. "Sir," said the other, "I was alluding to the vastness of your intellect." To which the schoolmaster rejoined : " And I, sir, to the size of your own."

Another story was told of his meeting in St. James's Park an old pupil—Father Petre—who had gone over to Rome. "Don't you know me, sir?" inquired the priest, who proceeded to give explanations in reference to his change of faith. "The Lord hath need of me," he ended unctuously. "Few men have read the Bible more carefully or frequently than I have," replied Busby, "but I never knew that the Lord had need of anything but once, and that was of an ass."

Busby, according to Steele, had "a genius for education" that produced as great an effect upon the age he lived in as that of any ancient philosopher upon his contemporaries. It is supposed that at one time the distinguished schoolmaster was in a position to boast that sixteen of his old pupils held bishoprics—and, whatever the exact number, doubtless he had flogged every one of them. Certain it is that from the grand old school at Westminster there came, in the course of the centuries, men who distinguished themselves in arms, in art, in song. It may be added that when Edward Vernon was serving in later years as a captain in the Navy (1714) five "Westminsters" were included in the Ministry—the Earl of Halifax ; Lord Cowper ; Finch, Earl of Nottingham ; Harley, Earl of Oxford—at the Admiralty ; and Pulteney. Some of



these notable "old boys" must have been school-fellows of Vernon himself during the seven years that he studied under the shadow of the great abbey, in which a monument in his own honour was, by and by, to find a place.

Busby believed in strict discipline. The *Grand Monarque*, his contemporary, inscribed on his guns the motto, "Ratio ultima regum"; and, instead of the "logic of kings," the learned doctor may be said to have inscribed on his birch-handle, "the logic of pedagogues." The argument was deemed satisfactory by the parents and guardians of the period. It was always unanswered and unanswerable, unless, indeed, we are to credit that other story of the quondam pupil—not Vernon—who became a naval captain and invited his old master to come aboard his ship. Directly the schoolmaster reached the deck all hands were piped for punishment. Then, with expletives deemed suitable to the service and the occasion, the exulting ex-pupil ordered the boatswain to give the horrified schoolmaster "three dozen."

But parental views in that age were truly exemplified by what Addison put into the mouth of Sir Roger de Coverley. It will be remembered that that estimable country gentleman paid a visit to Westminster Abbey, and came to the monument erected by Queen Anne in memory of Sir Cloudesley Shovel. "A very gallant man," exclaims Sir Roger, approvingly. But when he stands before the tomb

of Dr. Busby his enthusiasm is infinitely greater : “Dr. Busby ! a great man ; he whipped my grandfather ; a very great man ! I should have gone to him myself if I had not been a blockhead. A very great man !”

Busby, it may be said, lived to the age of eighty-nine. He died at Westminster in 1695, and James Vernon, his neighbour, writing to Lord Lexington, said : “Dr. Busby is dead at last. . . . What he had is chiefly given to the augmentation of several poor vicarages, but he has tacked so many lectures to his gifts that they will be dearly earned ; he could not forbear being a pedant in his will, imposing exercises to the world’s end.”

Which shows that Edward Vernon’s father was a shrewd judge of men, and apt in the expression of his judgments.

## CHAPTER II

A naval retrospect—Bantry Bay—Battle of Beachy Head—Lord Torrington disgraced—British victory in battle of La Hogue—Edward Vernon among the sailors—Nicknamed “The Admiral”—“Coached” by Sir Isaac Newton—London in Vernon’s boyhood—The City and the Navy—Covent Garden and its associations—Evelyn and Pepys at Portsmouth—Corruption at the Admiralty—Jack ashore—Vernon enters the Navy—The ordeal of a midshipman.

By means of increasing channels of intelligence, ill news travelled as fast as good news, if not faster. News of both sorts came to London in those days, and no doubt the instincts of national pride led the people to make the most of British successes, and the least of our naval reverses.

The “battle” of Bantry Bay scarcely deserved to be so described, and neither the English nor the French—each of whom claimed the victory—had particular reason to congratulate themselves upon the outcome. For once, indeed, the rewards bestowed upon British officers and seamen somewhat exceeded the merits of the occasion. A peerage was conferred on Admiral Herbert, Captain Cloudesley Shovel was knighted,

and every seaman engaged in the action received ten shillings for his services.

How different was the treatment meted out in later years to the subject of the present memoir for such a feat as the capture of Porto-Bello! If Bantry Bay was nothing to boast of, Beachy Head, alas! was a catastrophe to be deplored in shame and national abasement. Herbert, made Earl of Torrington for his doubtful services in the first affair, now, with more justice, was execrated for his failure off the coast of Sussex. The French, this time, had, beyond all dispute, defeated the great maritime allies, England and Holland. No wonder that France was jubilant, England dismayed, and the Dutch disgusted with the poor support which their ships had received from our own. The Earl of Nottingham, as Secretary of State, writing by Queen Mary's command to the English Ambassador in Holland, declared of the Dutch squadron (which showed much bravery) that—

“If my Lord Torrington had done his duty, we should to all appearance have obtained a complete victory. . . . You are to represent as you can this unhappy affair, which according to the best information I can get, is wholly to be imputed to Lord Torrington. The Queen has shown so great a resentment of it, and everybody here appears so full of anger against him, for what he has done, that the States-General will soon see vengeance taken of him, and if they will join with us, it may be extended to our enemies too, for we are fitting out all the ships that are in any condition of serving, and hope the States will do the same. And I do not doubt in a few days we shall have a better fleet under a better admiral; and then we reasonably presume that the enemy

will not only be unable to do us any damage, but will not dare to meet us on our coast, for all the officers and men of our fleet are enraged at the conduct of my Lord Torrington."

Let the men of 1907, and particularly the men of Devon, imagine what must have been felt when, as a consequence of our defeat, French vessels entered Tor Bay, and Frenchmen, however few in number, were landing on our shores, and doing what mischief they could before the approach of the militia made them retire to their ships and sail for Brest. What happened in Devonshire and on the coast of Sussex was a poor affair as a hostile landing, but it had a big significance. No wonder that consternation spread throughout the country. The citizens of London, headed by the Lord Mayor and Corporation, raised a considerable body of troops and placed them at the service of the Crown, and on every side was evidence of a burning desire and resolution to protect our shores and wipe out the stain upon the Flag.

Torrington was tried by court martial, and the evidence then taken proved: (1) That our preparations were too late; (2) our fleet too weak; (3) the ships ill-manned; (4) the Admiral without intelligence of what the French were doing or going to do, or else incredulous of the reports that reached him. In such circumstances our own sailors and the Dutch had fought under the worst possible conditions, and with the almost inevitable result.

It may be that Torrington, who was over-praised

for what he did in Bantry Bay, was unduly blamed for what he failed to do off Beachy Head. It was probably the feeling that others high in authority also were at fault which disinclined the court martial to make the Admiral a scapegoat. The accused was honourably acquitted, much to the dissatisfaction of the King, who straightway dispensed with the future services of several members of the Court, and broke some forty naval officers who had ranged themselves on the side of the ill-starred Admiral.

Every effort now was made in the preparation of a new and stronger fleet, and the King embarked for Holland to concert measures for retrieving the honour of the maritime allies. William III., unlike William IV., was no sailor, and it was his ill-fortune to pass eighteen hours of cold and bitter weather in an open boat before a landing could be made. But the Congress, when held, was fruitful. It paved the way for the battle of La Hogue, a victory already mentioned, but which, in its maritime and popular effects, would be unintelligible without the foregoing reference to the disastrous events that had preceded it.

"I can give no particular account of things," wrote Admiral Russell in his first dispatch, "but that the French were beaten." Beaten they were, and our ships chased them back to France with all the sail that they could make. A portion of the vanquished fleet—the smaller vessels—in their haste to escape, had cut away their heavy anchors, and notwith-



standing a thick fog and the darkness of night, made a desperate escape through the seething waters and amid the hungry rocks of the Race of Alderney. They reached the port of St. Malo while Rooke and his squadron were in hot pursuit of eighteen of the enemy's larger vessels eastward of Cape Barfleur. Most of these Rooke succeeded in driving close in shore. Others were seized, our men loading the French guns and turning them on the shore batteries in full sight of the great French and Irish camp that had been formed for the invasion of England.

Notwithstanding this splendid victory, however, it soon became manifest that French privateers were able to inflict enormous losses on our merchant ships. The question of convoy became, as again it may become in our naval history, one of paramount importance and enormous difficulty. What happened to the Smyrna Fleet and the convoy under Rooke remains as a lesson for all time. The House of Commons held an inquiry, and many defects in naval administration were there and then brought to light. Incidentally the astonished nation learnt that the sum of £1,036,415 was due for seamen's wages. No wonder the naval service was not popular, and much wonder that British seamen fought so well.

Many of those who had taken part in the battle of La Hogue, and knew also the inner history of our Navy, were to be found in Westminster; and among the old sailors young Edward Vernon spent

much of his time and pocket-money ; nor can it be doubted that what he learned from their lips quickened his interest in their welfare, and paved the way for those efforts to improve the seaman's position for which in later years he became so widely known and honoured. Meanwhile the boy did not neglect his Greek and Latin. Dr. Busby was not a man to tolerate indifference to his curriculum. That pedagogue of imperious temper, as already shown, held the profound conviction that the sparing of the rod led as a logical conclusion to the spoiling of the pupil.

But out of school hours the Westminster scholars would gather eagerly round their schoolmate to hear the yarns which he had had at first hand from sailors of the Fleet, and at an early age he earned the prophetic nickname of "The Admiral." His father wanted him to study law, possibly with the idea that he might reach the judicial bench, as was the case with one of his ancestors—Sir George Vernon, a judge of the Common Pleas in the reign of Charles I.—but the lad himself was bent on entering the Navy, and his father ultimately yielded to his vehement inclination. At sixteen he was a Latin scholar of no mean attainments, and at about that age was sent to Oxford, where his studies were mainly devoted to mathematics, navigation, and geography. Leaving the University, he pursued the study of navigation under a private tutor, and devoted considerable attention to fortification and gunnery.



At that period (doubtless in the character of a lad of unusual promise) he was made known to Sir Isaac Newton—not yet knighted—who had left his professorial chair at Cambridge to become Master of the Mint.

The great master of the exact sciences conceived a marked affection for young Vernon, talked to him of the method of taking latitude by observation of the Pole Star, and assuredly left in the embryo admiral's mind lessons and memories which he must have greatly treasured in his later years. But, apart from education in its narrower sense, a youngster of Edward Vernon's powers of observation could not fail to find, amid the world of London, books in its busy ways and sermons in stones on every side of him.

To aid in conjuring up the London and Londoners of a remote period, it is extremely interesting to turn to the chronicles of the observant visitors who, from time to time, came to England and afterwards wrote, or supplied material for, some account of their several experiences. From such sources vivid impressions are obtainable. We see ourselves as others saw us, though none of those interested and interesting visitors could possibly see the whole of England or gain anything more than an insight into this or that particular circle of society.

The Chevalier de Grammont cared nothing for the things that interested Pastor Moritz. Moritz saw nothing of the Court, and the cliques and the fair

but frail maids of honour, in which and amongst whom the love-making Frenchman spent his time. Like Paul Hentzner, who came in the days of Elizabeth, the Prussian Pastor has most to say concerning bridges, buildings, and streets; while the Chevalier, years before, was absorbed in the observation of the character, charms, and passions of more or less worthless but typical and entertaining individuals.

Something should be said, however, of the account given of London and Londoners in the middle of the eighteenth century by another writer, who evidently possessed an excellent knowledge of certain aspects of London life. At about the time when Admiral Vernon, in the Downs, was keeping a watchful eye upon the would-be invader, there was published a volume which professed to include another foreigner's account of London as he had seen it in 1731. The author assumed the name of Don Manoel Gonzales. The better opinion appears to be that he was an Englishman, masquerading, for reasons of his own, as a Portuguese. By whomsoever written, the narrative is extremely illuminating as far as it goes. Its special feature is a detailed account of the various wards and institutions within the limits of the City proper, and these chapters serve to remind us of the reason for that strong and sometimes vehement interest in maritime affairs which was displayed by the City Fathers.

Here, in the City, were the headquarters and the funds of the great colonising and trading companies which were so dependent on a strong navy for their protection and success. We read, of course, of the East India Company, which was incorporated by Elizabeth in 1600. The patent of the Company was challenged in the reign of William III., when an Act was passed (9 and 10 William III. c. 44) empowering every subject of England to trade to India who should raise a sum of specified amount for the supply of the Government. A new East India Company was the result, and later still an amalgamation with the old Company.

Among other important companies were: The Royal African Company (incorporated by 14 Car. II.), to trade from South Barbary to the Cape of Good Hope. This was mainly a slave-trading concern. The Canary Company (incorporated in the same reign) traded with what formerly were called the Fortunate Isles. The Hudson's Bay Company was a great concern that still survives. The South Sea Company, established by Act of Parliament in the reign of Anne, once was the most considerable of all, and its collapse and its cause are sufficiently well known. Besides these there were the Turkey, or Levant, Company and sundry others dependent for their very life on the maintenance of our maritime supremacy. In view of these enormous interests, it is easy to understand how keen in the City was the appreciation of the services

of a man like Vernon in upholding the British Flag in distant seas.

The Navy Office itself formerly was in the City, standing on the south side of Crutched Friars, near Tower Hill. "Don Manoel" describes it as being "a large, well-built pile of buildings, and the offices, for every branch of business relating to the Navy, admirably well disposed."

It was at the Navy Office that Samuel Pepys pursued his official duties. From Crutched Friars he went to Whitehall when summoned on business by his royal chief, the Duke of York. Thence, too, he went frequently to see or dine with my Lord Brouncker, who lived in the Piazza, Covent Garden. Covent Garden at one time was a fashionable place of residence (the time when it was a veritable garden square belonging to the Convent of Westminster). When Vernon was a middle-aged man people of quality were beginning to migrate to Grosvenor Square, about which "Don Manoel" was quite enthusiastic. He evidently regarded the new houses as exceeding magnificent, and was particularly impressed with the little paved yards with vaults before them, defended by a high palisade of iron, giving access to the kitchens of the new mansions. We call them areas nowadays, and find them as uninteresting as they are familiar.

Of course Covent Garden had its literary and dramatic, as well as its fashionable, associations. In





JOSEPH ADDISON.  
From an old Magazine.

[To face p. 21.



Russell Street was the famous Button's Coffee-house, founded by Joseph Addison for the benefit of Daniel Button, an old steward of the Countess of Warwick. To Button's came the wits of the period. It was at Button's that Addison spoke of Pope's translation of the "Iliad" in terms of comparison with Tickell's effort in the same direction, which caused much displeasure to the great Alexander. Pope did not die until 1744, surviving Addison by twenty-five years. Steele, another frequenter of Button's, died in 1729.

It was in 1738 that Samuel Johnson—nearly thirty then—came to town. "How different a place," said he, "London is to different people; but the intellectual man is struck with it as comprehending the whole of human life in all its variety, the contemplation of which is inexhaustible."

"By numbers there from shame or censure free,  
All crimes are safe but hated poverty."

Addison, it is interesting to notice, filled the same office that James Vernon once held—that of Under-Secretary of State; his chief being Sir Charles Hedges, Vernon's successor. The Earl of Sunderland, who succeeded Sir Charles, retained Addison in his employment.

Before the arrival of King George I. in England Addison was made Secretary to the Regency, and by virtue of his office was required to send notice to

Hanover that Queen Anne was dead and the throne vacant. The greatness of the event and the difficulty of finding suitable forms of expression so overwhelmed Addison that he could make no progress with the despatch. While he was mentally debating the niceties of diction suitable to the occasion, Mr. Southwell, a clerk of the Privy Council, was called in and ordered to dispatch the message. He did so in a matter-of-fact business style, and ever after prided himself on having done what the literary master had found it impossible at the moment to accomplish.

The Vernons' home was close to St. James's Park, where the elder Vernon often must have met King Charles taking his walk with his spaniels. These royal pets were far better cared for than the sailors and soldiers who fought for king and country. But the spaniels were quite as deserving as some of the residents in royal Whitehall. In a less fastidious age one might have ventured to describe bluntly the association of the dogs and the duchesses amid the gilded splendour of the palace. The former offended the nose of honest John Evelyn—a monarch-loving man, who discovered with nausea that the royal apartments were used as breeding kennels of the pampered animals. But his moral sense was even more revolted by the conduct of the demi-rep duchesses.

"I can never forget," he wrote in his diary, "the inexpressible luxury and prophanesne, gaming and all dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfulness of God" (it was Sunday evening) "which



this day se'nnight I was witnesse of, the King sitting and toying with his concubines, . . . a French boy singing love-songs in that glorious gallery, whilst about seventy of the greate courtiers, and other dissolute persons, were at basset round a large table, a bank of at least £2,000 in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflexions with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust."

It is interesting to note, by way of further retrospect, that Evelyn, like the observant Pepys, had intimate associations with the Navy, and on one occasion accompanied his brother diarist to Portsmouth, whither King James II. was going to inspect the forts. They set forth together in a coach-and-six, lay one night at Bagshot, and the next day waited on His Majesty, who was lodged in the Deanery at Winchester. They found the King discoursing with the Bishop of Bath and Wells concerning miracles! The right reverend father took occasion, it is recorded, to mention the salutary effect of the blood of King Charles, His Majesty's father, in healing one that was blind!

At Portsmouth the industrious diarists inspected the dockyard and fortifications, and came to the conclusion that "Portsmouth when finished will be very strong and a noble key." There were then thirty-two men-of-war in the harbour.

But it was not long afterwards that Evelyn had to record the King's alarm at the "greate fleete of the Dutch, whilst we had a very inconsiderable one," and that not ready; "whilst being in profound peace, there was a mighty land army, which there was no

neede of"—unless, as he suspected, to aid the Crown in forcing Popery upon the nation. Charles and James, besides being brothers, were in a financial sense birds of a feather. In the former reign, when there should have been £900,000 in hand for the public service, the money was missing. On one occasion the House of Commons discovered that the King and the corrupt clique surrounding him had pocketed double the above sum or spent it on vicious favourites, while the sailors of the Fleet were left unpaid. Once Pepys himself found a poor sailor lying at his door almost dead of starvation. Corruption honeycombed every public office, and more than any, the Admiralty. Pepys himself was "indifferent honest," and when two mast-makers brought him a box containing, as he thought, £100, he refused the bribe only because he feared the givers would not be likely to keep their own counsel about it. The trail of the serpent was over them all.

King James, at least, could not plead ignorance, for when he was Duke of York Pepys laid before him the ill condition of the Navy at a crisis when "all sober men were fearful of the ruin of the whole kingdom this next year"; "from which," adds Pepys piously, "good Lord, deliver us!"

When Jack Tar did get his wages he spent them after his immemorial manner. At Deptford, one day, Pepys found himself in the company of three drunken sailors, "but one especially, who told me such stories,

calling me captain, as made me mighty merry, and they would leap and skip, and kiss what maids they met all the way."

Pepys did not mention to these jovial spirits that he was Secretary of the Admiralty. He was wise as well as "merry." He lamented that the Duke of York, instead of being at sea as admiral, merely went round the ports and inspected the defences available to meet invasions, "as shameful to the nation, especially for so many proud vaunts as we have made against the Dutch." So the Medway was to be protected by a chain to keep the enemy from coming up to burn our ships; "all our care now being to fortify ourselves against their invading us."

In those dark days, which found their sequel in Vernon's own experiences, it looked as if Britannia never more could rule the waves. The dynasty was doomed. Things went from bad to worse, until that other diarist, Evelyn, coming up to town one day, "heard the newes of the Prince (of Orange) having landed at Tor Bay, coming with a fleet of neare 700 saill, passing through the Channell with so favourable a wind that our Navy could not intercept or molest them."

In 1693 a State lottery was sanctioned to raise money to carry on the war, and by the irony of fate the chief prize of £1,000 a year fell to a Frenchman!

In 1695 the financial foundations of Greenwich Hospital were laid, and Evelyn himself was appointed

treasurer. In 1696 he was present with Sir Christopher Wren when the actual foundation-stone was laid, and his list of contributors to the fund includes the name of Sir George Rooke for £100. Altogether nearly £70,000 passed through treasurer Evelyn's hands, and British sailors may well arise and call him blessed for his honest and industrious services.

Parting from Evelyn's fascinating diary, it may be mentioned in reference to the Wentworth family, afterwards allied to the Vernons, that Evelyn himself, in his younger days, was present at the trial of Strafford. On the 15th of January, 1641, he writes : "I went to London to heare and see the famous tryall of the Earl of Strafford . . . who now appeared in Westminster Hall, which was prepar'd with scaffolds for the Lords and Commons, who together with the King and Queene, Princes and flower of the noblesse, were spectators and auditors of the greatest malice and the greatest innocency that ever met before so illustrious an assembly. . . ." In the month of May following he also witnessed the last scene in the tragedy. "I beheld on Tower Hill the fatal stroke which sever'd the wisest head in England from the shoulders of the Earle of Strafford, whose crime coming under the cognizance of no human law, a new one was made, not to be a precedent, but his destruction, to such exorbitancy were things arrived."

The story of that terrible prostitution of justice may well have been brought to young Vernon's mind when

he stood in the historic place of trial. He, indeed, as his championship of the seamen showed in after-years, was ever a lover of justice and hater of treachery and oppression. Yet in his own case he was destined to learn that too often royal rewards go by favour, rather than by merit.

That painful experience, however, lay far ahead, and doubtless it was with the earnest belief that if he did his duty it would not pass unrewarded, that he entered the Royal Navy in 1701.

The number of midshipmen, like that of several other officers, was always in proportion to the size of the ship to which they belonged. Thus a first-rate man-of-war had twenty-four, and the inferior rates a suitable number in proportion. No person could be appointed lieutenant without having previously served two years in the Royal Navy as midshipman or mate, besides having been at least four years in actual service at sea, either in merchant-ships or in the Royal Navy. Midshipman was accordingly the station in which a young volunteer was trained in the several exercises necessary to attain a sufficient knowledge of the machinery, movements, and operations of a ship to qualify him for a sea officer. On his first entrance in a ship of war every midshipman had several disadvantageous circumstances to encounter. These were partly occasioned by the nature of the sea-service and partly by the mistaken prejudices of people in general respecting naval discipline and the genius of



sailors and their officers. In Vernon's time opinions differed as to the seamen. No character, in the opinion of some, was more excellent than that of the common sailor, whom they generally supposed to be treated with undue severity by his officers, drawing a comparison between them not very advantageous to the latter. The midshipman usually came aboard tinctured with these prejudices, and if the officers happened to answer his opinion he early conceived a disgust for the service, from a very partial and incompetent view of its operations. Blinded by these prepossessions, he was thrown off his guard, and sometimes was surprised to find mixed with honest sailors a crew of abandoned miscreants, ripe for any mischief or villainy, and only deterred from crimes by the terror of severe punishment. The pernicious example even of a few scoundrels in a ship of war was too often apt to spoil the principles of the whole crew, especially if the reins of discipline were relaxed.

The midshipman on many occasions was obliged to mix with the seamen, particularly in the exercises of extending or reducing the sails in the tops. He had to avail himself of their knowledge, and acquire their expertness in managing and fixing the sails and rigging, never suffering himself to be excelled by an inferior. A virtue, however, was to be found in almost every private sailor, which was entirely unknown to many of his officers ; this virtue was emulation. There was hardly a common tar who was not envious of superior

skill in his fellows, and jealous on all occasions of being outdone in what he considered as a branch of his duty ; nor was he more fearful of the dreadful consequences of whistling in a storm than of being stigmatised with the opprobrious epithet of "lubber."

## CHAPTER III

After La Hogue—"Honest Benbow"—Death of William III.—Queen Anne—Her Lord High Admiral—Battle of Vigo Bay—Vernon's baptism of fire—Thackeray's account in "Esmond"—Results of the victory—Maritime trade in time of war—Vernon present at capture of Gibraltar—Services of the Marines—Vernon in the battle of Malaga—Admiral Rooke's political enemies—Patriotic addresses to Queen Anne—Rooke's retirement and death—Vernon and other officers receive royal rewards.

THE last few years of the seventeenth century show no record of epoch-making events in naval warfare. La Hogue remained unrivalled, but the British Navy proved its mettle in many a single-ship action, and certainly would have achieved far greater collective results but for the shortcomings of the Admiralty. After the loss inflicted upon the convoyed merchant fleet in 1693, the Dutch had had some cause to exclaim, "Save us from our friends!" They had lost on that occasion ninety sail of trading vessels and two men-of-war. But for the resourcefulness of Admiral Rooke the loss, undoubtedly, would have been far heavier. It was imperative that an attempt should be



made to turn the tables. With the hour came the man, for about that time occasion brought into fresh prominence the redoubtable Commodore Benbow, to whom presently was entrusted an expedition to St. Malo. His squadron bombarded the town for several days, and a landing was effected, but the somewhat inglorious result was confined to the destruction of a convent. This bombardment was signalled by the trial of something novel in the way of fire-ships. The vessel used was a galliot of 300 tons, with 100 barrels of powder underneath a vast quantity of combustibles. Planks were laid over the latter with holes for the fire to climb to chests filled with grenades, cannon-balls, iron chains, pieces of metal, and other missiles. The tactics adopted were much the same as those of the Japanese in the early stages of the siege of Port Arthur, and the results almost equally disappointing. It is impossible to regret that such devices usually miscarry. However, before the bombardment was ended, one of the forts was demolished, and some eighty Frenchmen were made prisoners of war.

Benbow, on the whole, was more fortunate than were Admirals Berkeley and Carmarthen a little later, in their attack on Brest, for the loss on board our ships on that occasion amounted to 400 killed and wounded. Dieppe and Havre were the next French ports to be taken in hand, and the use of another and improved infernal machine once again proved practically futile. Dieppe, however, suffered very severely from our

bombardment. Sir Cloudesley Shovel about the same time tried his guns on Dunkirk, threw some shells into Calais, and then, under stress of weather, returned with his fleet to the Downs. The loss inflicted on the French seaports doubtless had a moral value by way of retribution for the mischief done to us by their privateers, but the material damage they suffered was a poor equivalent for the heavy cost of the expedition. Some useful experience had been acquired, however, and in a subsequent attack on St. Malo and Granville far heavier damage was caused by the bombardment.

In these operations "Honest Benbow" achieved fresh distinction. He had laid the foundation of his reputation under James II., in whose reign he fought a small vessel with desperate gallantry against a piratical Goliath in the Mediterranean, winning a victory which attracted the notice of Charles II. of Spain. That monarch straightway invited the English officer to his Court, and did him signal honour.

The end of Benbow's naval career was not less gallant than its beginning. In 1702, but for the cowardice of some of his subordinates, he would have won a striking victory over the French in the West Indies. The Admiral himself led a boarding party in this engagement, receiving a wound in the face and another in the arm. A little later his right leg was shattered by a chain-shot. They carried him below, but directly the terrible wound had been dressed by the surgeon the indomitable Benbow insisted on being taken

on deck, where he issued his orders for continuing the action. In that supreme moment victory for the Flag of England was snatched from his grasp, not through the skill of the French, but owing to the shameful conduct of a Captain Kirkby, who, by the irony of fortune, commanded the British ship *Defiance*. Kirkby, backed by Wade, another captain, practically refused to continue the fight, and Benbow was constrained to return with his squadron to Jamaica.

“I am sorry for it,” said the wounded Admiral to a lieutenant, who deplored the loss of his leg, “but I had rather have lost them both than have seen the dishonour brought upon the English nation.”

Kirkby and Wade subsequently were tried by court martial on the charge of cowardice, disobedience, and neglect of duty. They were found guilty, and shot at Spithead. The brave commander whom they had deserted in the hour of need also died; but his name and achievements are for ever enrolled in the long list of England’s naval heroes. Shortly before his death he received the following note from his antagonist, Rear-Admiral du Casse, who was in command of the French squadron :—

“SIR,—I had little hopes on Monday last but to have supped in your cabin, but it pleased God to order it otherwise ! I am thankful for it. As for those cowardly captains who deserted you, hang them up, for, by —— they deserve it.

“Yours,

“DU CASSE.”

Thus, full of years and honour, ended the life of a naval officer who had reached the topmost rung of the ladder at a time when Edward Vernon had yet to commence the climb. A nobler example of courage, endurance, and patriotism no young officer could have had before him. Vernon himself—as will be seen presently—was destined to take part in finishing the task which Benbow's squadron had been intended to achieve.

Meanwhile King William, predeceased by Queen Mary, had laid down the crown for ever. Anne was the next in the Protestant succession. The King was dead. Long live the Queen! As a matter of fact the Queen did not live long. Twelve years was but a short time to reign, compared with the years of Elizabeth and Victoria, but Anne may well be ranked with those two illustrious sovereigns in respect of the increased lustre which her reign brought to the Kingdom by the maintenance of the National Flag on land and sea.

"The muse of History," wrote Thackeray in "Esmond," "hath encumbered herself with ceremony as well as her sister of the Theatre. She, too, wears the mask and the cothurnus, and speaks to measure. Divest Louis XIV. of poetry, and we find but a little wrinkled old man, pock-marked, and with a great periwig, and red heels to make him look tall, a hero for a book if you like . . . but what more than a man to Madame Maintenon, or the barber who shaved him, or Monsieur Fagon, his surgeon.

Hogarth and Fielding have given us much truer pictures of their times than we can find in the pages of the formal historians. Thackeray, in "Esmond," has held the mirror up to the reign of Anne in a fashion which teaches us that without fiction we should have been ignorant of essential facts.

The story of Courts and Kings, if it is to be veracious, must in the general way give some particular account of the Woman behind the Throne ; but in the case of Queens, as a rule, it is otherwise. The reign of Queen Anne forms an exception to the rule. In her case, truly, there was a Woman behind the Throne, and that woman, of course, was Sarah Jennings, Duchess of Marlborough. If half that was said of her was true, a terrible person was this Woman behind the Throne of good Queen Anne. She bullied her lord and master and flouted her royal mistress. She quarrelled with her eldest daughter, and even with her granddaughter, the Duchess of Manchester, of whom she affected to be fond. To her she said, "You are a good creature, and I love you mightily, but you have a mother." "And she has a mother," cried the grandchild, to whom, apparently, something of the grandmother's spirit had descended.

Her contemporary, another Duchess, her Grace of Buckingham, had many points in common with the malignant Sarah. When Pope drew the famous character of Atossa he communicated it to each Duchess, pretending it was the portrait of the other. The

Duchess of Buckingham believed him. The other Duchess did not, and is said to have given him a thousand pounds to suppress the unflattering poem. But the poem was not destroyed after all.

In relation to Queen Anne nothing is more grotesque than the contrast between the Duchess's behaviour during Her Majesty's life and her tribute after her death :—

“Queen Anne was very graceful and majestic in her person ; religious without affectation ; she always meant well ; she had no false ambition. . . . She was extremely well-bred ; treated her chief ladies and servants as if they had been her equals ; her behaviour to all who approached her was decent and full of dignity, and showed condescension without art or meanness. All this I know to be true.

“SARAH MARLBOROUGH.”

This, and a great deal more, was cut round the pedestal at Blenheim Palace, on which a full-length figure of the Queen was mounted.

One of the first things Queen Anne had to do was to promise and vow that she would carry on the renewed preparations which then were being made to curb the growing power of France. With that object it was necessary to regain the confidence of our allies. Marlborough was immediately despatched to Holland. This was highly expedient, the States-General being “struck with a terrible damp upon the news of King William's death.” The English envoy raised the prooping spirits of the Dutch. The bond between





HER MAJESTY QUEEN ANNE.

From a Painting by John Closterman in the National Portrait Gallery.





England and Holland was cemented. War being declared against France and Spain, the House of Lords in the Address to the Throne assured the Queen of the "utmost assistance in the prosecuting so just and necessary a war, on the good success of which, under God, the welfare of these your Kingdoms and the liberties of Europe do entirely depend." The Commons House effusively thanked Her Majesty for her gracious condescension in communicating the royal intentions, and heartily promised to provide the sinews of war.

That Prince George of Denmark should have been made Lord High Admiral of course was one of those ornamental and highly dangerous acts of policy with which the history of royal families has rendered us familiar. Happily, at the same time, Rooke was made Vice-Admiral of England. Sir Cloudesley Shovel's services were still at the disposal of the Crown, and at the same time young officers like Edward Vernon were steadily maturing their powers and enlarging their experience. There was a great flourish of British trumpets, much promise of doughty deeds, and, for a time, results of a very disappointing character. The expedition placed under the command of Sir John Munden made but a poor show for the money expended on it. High hopes had been engendered in the public mind, and when these were disappointed, instead of popular applause, there was much angry clamour. Our squadron had come in touch with the

French, but not to hand-grips. The whole thing was a fiasco. Munden was tried by court martial, which assembled on the *Queen* at Spithead, for permitting the enemy to escape him, and for exhibiting a lack of courage and deficient skill. The Court acquitted him on every count, but so savage an outcry was raised throughout the country that the *Queen*, bowing to the storm, ordered the Admiral to be cashiered.

Thus under Anne the Navy had made a bad start. The next expedition, intended to reduce Cadiz, was placed under the command of Admiral Rooke. Here again, however, the results were disappointing, and the main advantage gained lay in the discovery of the movements of the French squadron then convoying a great fleet of Spanish galleons. When the movements of the galleons were made known to Rooke, he turned his back on Cadiz and made sail for Vigo Bay—a port which, under greatly changed conditions, was the temporary refuge of the Russian Fleet in the autumn of 1904.

The way in which this all-important information was obtained was curious in the extreme. Returning to England, several of the British ships ran short of water, and Captain Hardy, in the *Pembroke*, was ordered to Lagos Bay to obtain supplies for his own ship and certain others. Among those who went ashore after entering the Bay was Mr. Beauvoir, the chaplain of the *Pembroke*. The only person by whom they could

make themselves understood was the French Consul, and this gentleman became very communicative, possibly because Beauvoir was a native of the Channel Islands, and was regarded by the Consul as more or less a fellow-countryman.

The incautious representative of France entertained the chaplain (who could talk French), and boasted over the festive board of what his most Christian master was going to do in the ensuing summer, when such a French fleet would put to sea as neither the English nor the Dutch would dare to face. Beyond this he hinted broadly that the Spanish galleons at that very time were not far off. Later this news was confirmed by another too loquacious person, who said that M. Chateau-Renaud actually was then at Vigo with 30 men-of-war and 22 of the treasure ships.

With this important news in his possession the reverend gentleman, in the character of intelligence officer, hurried on board the *Pembroke* and awoke Captain Hardy from his slumbers. Hardy lost no time in following the British Fleet, but owing to heavy weather was unable for some days to get in communication with Sir George Rooke. Directly Rooke heard the news he called a council of war, composed of the English and Dutch flag officers. Pursuant to the resolution then promptly arrived at, the fleet steered for Vigo.

The grand fleet neared the town in weather so hazy that the French saw nothing of its approach.

Their admiral, Chateau-Renaud, however, had taken all human precautions against a surprise. Nor were the defences of the place to be despised. A battery of 8 brass, and 20 iron, guns protected the northern side of the bay, and on the south was a platform of 20 brass, and the same number of iron, guns. There was also a stone fort with a breastwork and deep trench before it, mounting 10 guns and manned by about 500 soldiers.

Another general council was called by the British Admiral, and it was decided to force the harbour on the following morning. For this purpose a detachment of 15 English and 10 Dutch line-of-battle ships was selected. In accordance with the plan of attack, the frigates and bomb-vessels were to follow, and finally, if required, the great men-of-war. But these were not to be risked without further information as to the depth of water available behind the defence works. To give the better countenance to the enterprise, and to encourage the seamen and the troops, it was decided that all the flag officers should join the attacking squadron. The admirals, therefore, quitted their large ships of the line in order to share in the dangers, as well as in the honour, of the attack.

Rooke was indefatigable. He spent the greater part of the night in going from ship to ship, in order to give the necessary orders and to encourage both officers and seamen for the work that lay before them on the morrow. Such an example could hardly

fail to impress Edward Vernon and other youthful officers.

The first and second rates drawing too much water for the work in hand, the Admiral himself went out of the *Royal Sovereign* into the *Somerset*, and Admiral Hopson out of the *Prince George* into the *Torbay*, and other admirals made corresponding changes.

The attack was opened on the following morning by the land forces, under the Duke of Ormond. All that need be said of that part of the business is that the troops did what they had to do. When the English colours were seen flying from the fort the Admiral instantly gave the signal to weigh. The line was formed, consisting of twenty-four sail, and the *Association* and the *Barfleur* were told off to batter the forts on each side of the inlet.

The honour of leading the van was entrusted to Admiral Hopson, in whose ship, the *Torbay*, Edward Vernon was serving as a midshipman. The entrance of the harbour was narrow, and protected with a boom of immense strength composed of masts and yards secured to anchors, the ends being attached to two of the French ships of greatest fighting power. Inside the boom other French vessels were in position with their broadsides facing the mouth of the harbour. The *Torbay*, crowding every sail, bore down upon the boom, which yielded to the terrific impact, and in a moment the English commander found himself between the *Bourbon* and the *Espérance* and in the immediate

proximity of a French fire-ship. The probability is that the *Torbay* could not have escaped destruction but for the remarkable accident that the fire-ship, primarily a merchantman, carried a cargo of snuff which there had been no time to unload. When the flames got hold of the cargo, the snuff so deadened the fire that danger to the *Torbay* from that source was averted. But the brave ship suffered terribly from the French guns. She had sailed into the very jaws of death, and her loss was over 100 men killed, drowned, and wounded. The foretop mast was shot away ; fire destroyed the foreyard and foresail ; the larboard shrouds, fore and aft, were burned to the dead-eyes, and it presently became imperative for the Vice-Admiral to shift his flag to another vessel. Thus did Edward Vernon, then a lad of eighteen, receive his baptism of fire. Boy though he was, he bore himself throughout the ordeal in such a manner that, later, Admiral Hopson recommended him to the notice of the Admiralty.

The other ships of the squadron, well supported by their Dutch allies, finished the arduous work that Hopson had begun. It was a signal triumph over the combined naval power of France and Spain. Of the French Fleet thirty sail of the line were destroyed or captured, and the like fate befell twenty-two of the Spanish galleons.

In this Vigo Bay victory, in which Midshipman Vernon played an active part as above narrated, a



great novelist has made one of his finest characters participate :—

“On the first day of July, 1702, a great fleet, of 150 sail, set sail from Spithead under the command of Admiral Shovell, having on board 12,000 troops, with His Grace the Duke of Ormond as the Captain-General of the expedition. One of those 12,000 heroes . . . the junior ensign of Colonel Quin’s regiment of Fusiliers, was in a quite unheroic state of corporal prostration a few hours after sailing.”

For some not very apparent reason Thackeray—from Harry Esmond’s point of view—writes disparagingly of the expedition, comparing it to the buccaneering enterprises of Captain Avery or Captain Kidd. Nevertheless, in picturing its effect upon the imaginary ensign, he delightfully describes what probably were the feelings of the veritable midshipman :—

“But the campaign, if not very glorious, was very pleasant. New sights of nature by sea and land—a life of action, beginning now for the first time—occupied and excited the young man. . . . To see with one’s own eyes men and countries is better than reading all the books of travel in the world, and it was with extreme delight and exultation that the young man found himself actually upon his grand tour, and in the view of peoples and cities which he had read about as a boy. He beheld war for the first time—the pride, pomp, and circumstance of it, at least, if not much of the danger. He saw actually with his own eyes those Spanish cavaliers and ladies whom he had beheld in imagination in that immortal story of Cervantes which had been the delight of his youthful leisure.”

At any rate the part played by the *Torbay* was not to be minimised. England was proud of it. One of

the first acts of Queen Anne in recognition of the services of the Navy was to bestow a knighthood upon Hopson with a pension of £500 a year. All the gold coins of 1703 bear the word "Vigo," and were made from the captured bullion. In the present year of grace these coins are only to be found in museums and collections, but Vigo Street, leading from Regent Street, still remains to remind us of the victory.

The importance of that victory is only to be appreciated by realising the intolerable injury that France and Spain had for some time previously been inflicting on our commercial interests all the world over. More especially had we suffered in the West Indies. Various attempts were made to grapple with the problem, but the British naval force available in those waters was never sufficient to suppress the French privateers and protect the English settlements. No doubt there were sufficient reasons for concentrating our naval strength in the Mediterranean, but to many it appeared necessary also to show greater vigour in remoter seas; hence, after Queen Mary's death, the Address of the House of Lords to the Throne, which insisted on the necessity of maintaining such a force in the West Indies as should be "a security for our coasts and plantations, and a protection of our trade."

A backward glance must be taken in order to understand the actual position. The West Indies had been neglected and mismanaged. Wilmot's expedition, from which much was hoped, seems to have developed



into a system of plundering rather than of protection ; the commodore himself and great numbers of his men ultimately died from "a violent and uncommon distemper," and the project ended in a fiasco. The truth was that threatened dangers nearer home were absorbing the attention of the Admiralty. It is to be remembered that the year 1696 had witnessed the great preparations by the French to invade our shores, with the ostensible object of restoring James II. to the throne of England. The intention was to embark 16,000 men at Dunkirk, under the command of James in person, with the Marquis of Harcourt—another family connection of the Vernons—afterwards Marshal of France in actual command. Such was the urgency of the situation that desperate efforts were resorted to in order to man our fleet. At Portsmouth and Plymouth peremptory orders were given to take the men out of merchant-ships and to secure all straggling seamen. At the Nore also watermen, bargemen, and lightermen from the river Medway were impressed in large numbers.

A stroke of ill-luck at this juncture was the destruction of the *Royal Sovereign* by fire at Chatham. This historic vessel, the first monster ship ever built in England, though originally designed for show, had been converted into a most formidable man-of-war, and had played an important part in many naval engagements, first with the Dutch and afterwards with the fleets of France. Ultimately, old and leaky, use-

less for further fighting, she was laid up at Chatham, but still loomed large in the popular imagination. Her total destruction, which was due to negligence on board, caused national regret.

But "the best-laid plans of mice and men gang oft agley," and the French invasion went off in smoke; not because we were in a position to meet and destroy their squadrons, but owing to the stormy weather which upset the calculations of the King of France. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The wind and the waves, as in the days of the great Armada, fought once again for England. But Parliament was awake at last, and voted £2,371,197 for the maintenance of 40,000 seamen, the land marine corps, and incidental purposes. The wholesome spirit of criticism was abroad. Even Admiral Rooke was called to account for allowing a French squadron to sail unmolested from Toulon to Brest.

But the French wanted peace. There were a good many people in France who did not desire to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the sake of "the worst and dullest of the Stuarts." James might foam and fume, but there were limits to the charity of the most Christian King of France. The Congress of Ryswick led ultimately to the Treaty of Ryswick, the news of which set the bells once again ringing in London, and the guns booming at the Tower.

Such, briefly touched upon, were some of the salient features of the naval history of the period—only to be

justly appreciated after the event, and which a rising officer like Edward Vernon must have studied closely on the threshold of his career.

There were, and are, various lessons to be learnt from what had happened. An exhausting war, as usual with us, had begun badly for England. The French fleets got to sea before our own, and although we had Holland for an ally, we never succeeded in overwhelming the enemy. The change of Government, of course, explained much of the disaffection and want of co-operation that marked our conduct at sea, and when at length things had settled into better form the French gradually realised that, with all our shortcomings, we were more than a match for them.

But if, on the whole, our Navy was a gainer by the war, our maritime trade had encountered staggering losses, partly through lack of adequate convoy, partly through the risks deliberately incurred by rapacious shipowners. The policy of France was astute, and is not unlikely to furnish hints for future imitation. Indeed, questions of recent years between Russia and this country in connection with the right of search for contraband of war serve to remind us pointedly that if you distress the mercantile community of an unfriendly nation you inevitably set afoot a natural anxiety for peace. Fortunately, the Ministers of William, having only muddled through the war, ultimately secured by the Treaty of Ryswick some important gains.

By the fourth article the French King engaged not to disturb the King of Great Britain in any of his dominions, nor to assist, directly or indirectly, any of England's enemies. The use of commerce and navigation also was to be restored between the subjects of the high contracting parties, and there was to be reciprocal surrender of all places in European America which had been captured in the course of the war.

Thus had general peace been restored to Europe at the end of 1697. Unhappily, it was not very long before the action of the Spaniards in the West Indies brought about a state of things which again necessitated the intervention of our warships, thus leading up slowly, and step by step, to events in which Vernon was to play so prominent a part.

His first experience in the West Indies was gained very soon after he entered the service. Promoted to second lieutenant after the victory of Vigo, he served in that capacity on board the *Resolution* in an expedition under Captain Walker. This expedition included ten transports carrying four regiments. Walker succeeded in blocking up the harbour of Santiago in Cuba, sunk several privateers, and took the town of La Bayliffe, as also that of Basseterre. Lieutenant Vernon during this cruise made himself thoroughly acquainted with the Leeward Islands, drew plans of the harbours, and sounded the bays with such carefulness that hardly a sandbank escaped his observation. In 1704 Vernon was on the flagship of Sir

George Rooke, when that officer conveyed the then King of Spain (afterwards Charles VI. of Germany) to Lisbon. His Majesty bestowed upon the Admiral and his officers various gifts which are more specifically referred to on another page.

After making some captures off Lisbon, the Admiral, with thirty-seven sail of the line and four fire-ships, joined Sir Cloudesley Shovel at sea.

Vernon's naval experience presently was enlarged by a memorable achievement of that year—the capture of Gibraltar—which has enabled England from that day to this, and it is to be hoped for all time, to place a padlock on the Mediterranean Sea. A body of marines, English and Dutch, was landed on the isthmus to the north of the Rock, under the command of the Prince of Hesse, whose summons to surrender the Governor disregarded. The ships of the allies then commenced a furious cannonade which lasted for five hours, and drove the Spaniards from their guns. The south mole was taken by our troops, only about 1,800 in number, and Rooke made another and more peremptory demand for the surrender of the town. Next day the Governor capitulated, and when the Prince marched in at the head of the marines the garrison was found to consist of exactly 150 men!

But the ease with which Gibraltar was captured should not be allowed to detract from the excellence of Rooke's plans for taking it and the arduous nature of the task that he and those under him were prepared

to face. The British found the town extremely strong, with 100 guns pointing seawards and an ample supply of ammunition. The garrison was insignificant, but, in the opinion of military experts, the place itself was so strong, such a veritable Pillar of Hercules, that 50 resolute men should have been able to hold it against 1,000. The attack made by the seamen of our fleet and the marines was worthy of the best traditions of the British Navy ; nor was it a bloodless victory. We lost 60 men killed, and there were over 200 wounded, including a captain, seven lieutenants, and a boatswain. The French, in order to minimise the achievement, alleged that the Spaniards had neither garrison nor guns, but the facts were as above stated. Having garrisoned Gibraltar with as many men as could be spared, the fleet sailed to Tetuan, watered there, and then stood over again from the coast of Barbary towards Gibraltar. Eighteen hundred marines<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The splendid corps now known as the Royal Marines (the Red Marines being the Royal Marine Light Infantry, and the Blue Marines the Royal Marine Artillery) originated in the reign of Charles II. It was then known as "The Maritime Regiment of the Lord High Admiral of England" (H.R.H. the Duke of York and Albany). William III. disbanded the corps, but raised a similar body under his own warrant, and Queen Anne converted three infantry regiments into marines. Their gallantry largely contributed to the success of our attack on Gibraltar, where Vernon may be said to have witnessed the commencement of their honourable career. It was not until 1802 that the Marines received the prefix "Royal," which was conferred by George III. in recognition of their services in the war against the French.



were taken aboard, and the fleet then put to sea in search of the French. When the enemy's ships were sighted near Cape Malaga the British bore down on them in line of battle. Night presently hid the French from view, but in the morning they were again in sight, some three leagues away. The French then brought to. In the English line Sir George Rooke, with Rear-Admirals Byng and Dilke held the centre. Sir Cloudesley Shovel and Sir John Leake led the van, and Vice-Admiral Callemberg commanded the Dutch ships in the Red Squadron.

Although the French, at any rate at first, showed no disposition to fight, they had in some respects the advantage. They were stronger in point of numbers, having ten three-deck ships more than the confederates had ; they also had the coast and, near at hand, a friendly harbour. Moreover, their ships were clean and fully manned. On the other hand, the British and the Dutch were remote from friendly ports and without any hope of succours. They were short of men and short of provisions ; an enormous quantity of ammunition had been expended in the recent attack on Gibraltar, and the ships' bottoms were in a condition that would tell heavily against them if and when speed became of vital importance. Nevertheless, the allied fleets were bent on forcing, rather than shunning, an engagement. They had altogether 53 ships of the line and 18 small craft.

The French had in ships of the line 3,533 guns and

24,155 men. With frigates and fire-ships they counted in all 92 sail. Like many another battle, the engagement that followed was a Sunday fight. The fire and fury of a deadly struggle raged amid the thunder of the guns on the day of peace and rest. The British Fleet in order of battle bore down upon the enemy at ten o'clock on a glorious summer morning. When about half-gunshot the Admiral observed that the French set all their sails at once, seeming to intend to stretch ahead and weather the confederate fleet; but, discovering the intention, Sir Cloudesley Shovel and Sir George Rooke, foreseeing what would be the consequence if the van were intercepted, bore down upon the enemy with the rest of the confederate fleet and put out the signal for the fight. Shovel immediately commenced the battle. Both sides entered on the contest with great fury, and about two o'clock in the afternoon the enemy's van gave way to ours, as their rear did to the Dutch towards nightfall. Several of our ships were ultimately forced to go out of line for want of shot, and, as a result of this, great strain was thrown upon the Admiral's flag-ship, the *St. George*, and also on the *Shrewsbury*. Indeed, on every ship in the fleet the want of ammunition made itself dangerously felt before the fall of darkness. The Dutch, in the rear, had engaged the enemy with the greatest alacrity and courage, and being better provided with ammunition, kept their guns at work after those of the British ships had ceased to fire. Sir Cloudesley



Shovel, not for the first time in his career, proved his courage and his seamanship. Seeing that the *St. George* and the *Shrewsbury* were short of shot, he backed astern and thus sought to relieve his chief. The manœuvre drew several of the enemy's ships from their attack upon our centre, which was being sorely pressed, and at length drove them out of line of battle. But the French ships were well handled, and presently managed to tow out of danger without receiving a single broadside from Shovel's guns. There were many exciting episodes in the course of this long-drawn Sunday battle. The *Serieux*, a ship in the French Admiral's division, thrice boarded the *Monk*, an English ship commanded by Captain Mills, who with splendid resolution each time cleared the deck of the boarders and at last made them bear away. The same French ship afterwards was so disabled as to be obliged to quit the line. Another British ship, under Captain Jumper, engaged three of the enemy. Similar pluck was shown by other captains; and, but for the want of ammunition in the centre, it is probable that a signal British victory would have been recorded. The battle ended with the day, and the result was indecisive. Our loss was as follows :—

Killed ...	...	...	...	687
Wounded	...	...	...	<u>1,632</u>
				2,319
Dutch losses	...	...	...	<u>400</u>
Total	...	...	...	2,719

The loss of the enemy in officers and men exceeded 3,000.

This battle of Malaga, indeed, ought to rank among our hardest fights at sea. Sir Cloudesley Shovel himself, who knew what fighting was, declared that it was one of the toughest struggles in which he had ever been engaged. Of the whole fleet he said there was hardly a ship but was obliged to shift one mast, and many all. After the battle there were not three spare topmasts left in the whole fleet. Every man in the line did his duty manfully, and Sir George Rooke averred that he never observed the true English spirit so apparent in the seamen of the fleet as on this occasion. Although the French claimed the victory, they declined a renewal of the engagement, though the British Admiral sought to bring it about. This avoidance of a further trial of strength may have been due to the fact that the Count de Toulouse, who was in command of the enemy, had received serious injuries, having been wounded in the forehead, shoulder, and thigh. He undoubtedly was a brave officer, the most manly and able of the Grand Monarch's sons. The Count's mother was Madame de Montespan, the mistress who succeeded Louise de la Valière, and who, in turn, was succeeded by Madame de Maintenon.

Rooke had enemies as well as friends. In the year 1698 he had entered Parliament as member

for Portsmouth, his colleague being Major-General Thomas Erle (the Lieutenant-Governor). They were re-elected in 1700 and again in 1701. Rooke kept his seat in 1702, and was re-elected in 1705. Here it may be mentioned that Vernon, the young officer who served under him in the battle of Malaga, was destined to represent the premier port some thirty-five years later. He was elected member for Portsmouth in the place of the Hon. Charles Stewart in 1740.

In Parliament Rooke mostly voted with the Tories, and that a Tory should be Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the British Fleet was quite enough in the reign of William III. to make him many enemies. Repeated pains were taken to damage the Admiral in the opinion of the King, who was urged to remove him from his seat at the Admiralty Board. To William's honour be it said that he refused to listen to these spiteful counsels. "I will not remove him," he is reported to have said. "Sir George Rooke served me faithfully at sea; and I will never replace him for acting as he thinks most for the service of his country in the House of Commons."

Queen Anne made Rooke a Privy Councillor, and rewarded him for his services at Vigo. But he had not done all that was expected of him—or, in other words, the impossible—in the matter of the Cadiz expedition, and though to him we owe the possession

of Gibraltar and the acknowledgment of splendid services in the battle of Malaga, there were men in Parliament who were determined to find fault with him. As regards the battle of Malaga the Admiral's achievement in breaking the power of the French Navy was overshadowed by the almost contemporaneous victory gained by Marlborough in the battle of Blenheim. These two battles, in which there really was nothing to compare, were absurdly made the subject of comparison. Both feats of arms became the subject of party debate. The Whigs were indefatigable in magnifying the Duke of Marlborough's success, and the Tories, while sharing in that tribute, claimed just recognition of the gallant services of Sir George Rooke.

An inquiry into his conduct in the House of Lords amply justified all that he had done in the matter of Cadiz. After the Admiral's return to England addresses to the Throne poured in, and one from the county of Cornwall contained passages—involved in diction, but patriotic in spirit—that deserve to be quoted. It referred to Marlborough's victory, and then went on—

“But 'tis not enough that your Majesty triumphs on land ; to complete your glory, your forces at sea have likewise done wonders. A fleet so much inferior, in such a condition, by being so long out, in such a want of ammunition, by taking Gibraltar without galleys (which were of so great service to the enemy)—all these disadvantages considered, nothing certainly could equal the conduct of your Admiral, the bravery of your officers, the courage of your seamen,





ADMIRAL SIR GEORGE ROOKE.

From a Painting attributed to Michael Dahl in the National Portrait Gallery.

during the engagement, but their conduct, their courage, and their bravery after it, whereby they perfected a victory which otherwise, in human probability, must have ended in an overthrow.

"May your Majesty never want such commanders by sea and land. . . .

"May your Majesty never want (what, sure, you never can) the hearts, the hands, the purses of all your people. Had we not, Madam, of this county inherited the loyalty of our ancestors . . . such obligations would have engaged the utmost respect ; and such all of us will ever pay your sacred person and Government, as with one voice we daily pray Long Live Queen Anne ! to whom many nations owe their preservation."

But Sir George Rooke perceived, as Vernon did in his own case later on, that as he rose in credit with his fellow-countrymen he earned the increased enmity of those in place and power. Like a wise man he realised that his public career was at an end. He had fought many a good fight, and the last was not the least. He had no wish that public business should be disturbed by a stormy controversy over his merits or his failings. Content to retire into private life, he passed the remainder of his days mostly at his seat in Kent. That famous county has rarely, if ever, produced a worthier son. It was said that the lawyer who made Rooke's will was surprised at the smallness of his property. "I do not leave much," said the old Admiral, "but what I leave was honestly gotten ; it never cost a sailor a tear or the nation a farthing."

A monument was erected to his memory—not by the State—in Canterbury Cathedral. There can be



no doubt that the fact that Rooke, Vernon, and other admirals had seats in Parliament while they were in command of fleets tended to provoke, and to some extent explains, the mixed feelings with which they were regarded. But there certainly seems much fitness in the idea of men of their special knowledge and profession representing in Parliament the constituency of a great naval port and dockyard. In the present Parliament, by way of contrast, the senior member for Portsmouth is a retired and highly respected outfitter, and his colleague is a local solicitor.

When, after Malaga, the British squadron returned to England, Vernon was among the officers who received royal recognition of the services rendered, which in his case took the form of a purse of two hundred guineas, presented to him by Queen Anne in person.



## CHAPTER IV

Peter the Great and the Navy—Speech when self-made a Vice-Admiral—Vernon serves in the Baltic—Protection of shipping—Blockading the Russian ports—Further service under Sir Cloudesley Shovel—The etiquette of the Flag—British sovereignty of the sea—Van Tromp and the Union Jack—Treaty with the Dutch—Admirals' flags in Vernon's time—Sailing ships in action—Difficulty in manning our ships—The great storm of 1703—Vernon shipwrecked with Sir Cloudesley Shovel in the storm of 1707—Honour paid to the Admiral's memory—Sir John Leake—Defoe's naval project—The press-gang and the law—Renewed trouble in the West Indies—Government employment of Captain Kidd—Kidd's piracies—Parliamentary attack on the King and his Ministers—Kidd at the Bar of the House of Commons—Kidd convicted at the Old Bailey and hanged—France and our American Colonies—French attack defeated at Charlestown—Commodore Wager's expedition—Spanish treasure-ships—Vernon appointed captain of the *Jersey*—Makes important captures—Proclamation of peace—Naval scandals in 1711—Bishop Burnet as critic—Dean Swift on our bargain with Portugal—Death of Queen Anne.

IN the days when Edward Vernon was getting ready for the sea-service there came to England another and ever-remarkable student of all things connected with ships and business in great waters. This student was Peter the Great, of whom it was said that his

“imagination was full of sails, yard-arms and rudders.” At the period in question the chief ambition of this amazing monarch was to acquire the qualifications of a good boatswain or ship’s carpenter. Peter had only one port—Archangel—and even there the shipping was entirely foreign, and mainly that of our own merchant adventurers. The Swedish province barred Russia’s access to the Baltic, and in the south-east the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles were passages to the Mediterranean through which Russia had, and still has, no right of way.

The Czar stayed at a house in Norfolk Street, Strand, which had convenient access to the river. Londoners crowded to see him, and, doubtless, young Vernon was of the number. But Peter found Norfolk Street too far from Deptford Dockyard, and Evelyn’s house was placed at his disposal, with somewhat painful results. The Russian magnates who “came to Court-balls dropping pearls and vermin” were not desirable tenants, and after the royal visitors’ departure the Treasury had to spend a large sum in making the Evelyn establishment fit again for habitation. Peter had peculiar views about places of residence. When he paid a visit to Greenwich Hospital, and King William asked him how he liked it, the Czar replied, “Perfectly well, and if I were to advise your Majesty, it would be to remove your Court thither and convert your palace into a hospital.”

When Peter had returned to Russia, and had

passed through every naval grade, he made himself a vice-admiral, and delivered to his senate, if he did not compose, a remarkable and prophetic speech concerning the future of his empire.

In connection with Russian affairs it may be convenient to mention here that Vernon, after he attained the rank of captain, saw considerable service in the Baltic.

In May, 1715, in command of the *Assistance*, 50 guns, he accompanied Sir John Norris, whose fleet was ordered to the Baltic for the protection of our trade. The English officers and those of the Dutch Fleet who joined them were enthusiastically welcomed and *fêted* at the Court of Denmark. Having safely convoyed a great fleet of merchant-ships to their several destinations, they returned to home waters for the winter. In five succeeding summers Captain Vernon was employed under Admiral Norris for the same purpose, and in the same part of the world.

Again in 1726, appointed to the *Grafton*, 70 guns, he was sent to the Baltic, the fleet this time being under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Wager. At that time England was at war with Russia, and the task of the fleet was to blockade the Russians in their ports. Two years later, Captain Vernon, while in command of the *Grafton*, was with the fleet employed in this same sea again under Sir John Norris.

These events in his career, though all-important to

the country he served, are only briefly touched upon, because the more notable of his sea-services were rendered in the West Indies, and there much of dramatic interest had been happening during the period above indicated.

With Rooke and Shovel to uphold her naval power, Queen Anne was indeed well served. None knew better than the two Admirals mentioned how to uphold the honour of our Flag, not merely in battle but in naval etiquette. Once when Shovel arrived off Leghorn the town saluted him with only five guns. He ignored them, nor would he accept the usual present from the governor, but insisted that the presence of the Union Jack must be acknowledged with a salute of eleven guns. The etiquette of the Flag was enforced with equal firmness by Rooke. It was the King of Portugal's wish on a great occasion that, on his going aboard the Admiral's ship and striking his standard, the English Flag should be struck at the same time, and that on leaving the ship His Majesty's standard should be hoisted and the Admiral's flag remain struck until the King had reached the shore. To this Rooke refused to assent. The moment the King left our ship the Admiral insisted on hoisting the Flag, "so that the Flag of England was no longer struck than the Standard of Portugal." The significance of such observances has early sanction in our maritime history. The sovereignty of what used to be styled the British seas required symbolical assertion.

As far back as the reign of King John our marine law required :—

“That if a lieutenant in any voyage being ordained by common council of the kingdom do encounter upon the sea any ships or vessels, laden or unladen, that will not strike and veil their bonnets at the commandment of the lieutenant of the King, but will fight against them of the fleet, that if they can be taken, they be reputed as enemies, and their vessels, ships, and goods, taken and forfeited as the goods of enemies, though the masters or possessors of the same would come afterwards and allege that they are the ships, vessels, and goods of those that are friends to our lord the King, and that the common people in the same be chastised by the imprisonment of their bodies for their rebellion, at discretion.”

“Lowering the Flag or sails,” says an old writer, “is but like uncovering the head by vailing the hat or bonnet, which amongst us is used as a token of subjection to our King.” The salutation was not the subject of treaty until 1654. Two years earlier Van Tromp, in sheer provocation, flaunted his jacks and pennants in the face of the fiery Blake, who resented the defiance by promptly attacking the Dutchman’s ships. At the conclusion of the war that followed it was provided by treaty :—

“That the ships of the United Provinces, as well those fitted for war as others, which should meet in the British seas any of the ships of war of England, should strike their flag and lower their topsail, in such manner as had been any time practised before, under any former government.”

Thus Cromwell, it will be seen, resolutely exacted the same token of respect that had been previously

accorded to the British Crown—an acknowledgment which, after the Restoration, was further enlarged by treaty.

In relation to naval flags it is to be noted that only flag officers, *i.e.*, admirals, vice-admirals, rear-admirals, and commodores, are privileged to carry a flag indicative of their rank. In Vernon's time English admirals were of three classes, denoted by the colour of their respective flags. An admiral of the red held the centre in an engagement with the enemy, the admiral of the white was in the van, and the admiral of the blue brought up the rear. The distinction was not abolished until 1864. All admirals now hoist the white ensign. The red belongs to the merchant service, and the blue to the Royal Naval Reserve.

In a naval engagement the old system was to draw up the fleet in a straight line upon one of the close-hauled lines, under an easy sail. The frigates, fire-ships, transports, &c., were placed at proper distances on the other side, with respect to the enemy. The distance between two adjacent ships in the line was usually about a cable's length; but the admiral increased or diminished this distance according to circumstances. The nearer, however, the ships were to each other, the stronger the line, and consequently the more difficult for the enemy to break through; but sufficient interval had to be left, so that if a ship became badly damaged she could be got out of the line without becoming foul or falling aboard the ship next astern,



which would have been the means of putting the whole line in confusion.

The strength of the fleet also depended more on the size of the ships and the weight of the metal than on the number. The fewer the ships in a fleet, the more distinctly could the signals be perceived and answered by those at the end of the line; the order of battle could be better kept, and the fleet more easily manœuvred. A small ship was sooner disabled than a large one; and in the case of a three-decker, even if the deck happened to be strewn with the wreckage of broken masts, yards, &c., thus rendering the working of the guns on that deck an impossibility, yet, if the weather was calm, the guns on the other two decks might be used. If boarding the ship were deemed practicable, it is evident that the large ship, on account of the height of her side, as well as for other reasons, had the advantage over a smaller one. Large ships, too, for the most part, were better able to encounter a storm, and in a gale generally had the advantage in point of sailing. Hence it is obvious that a small fleet composed of large vessels was far superior to a larger fleet of smaller ships.

When, in a naval engagement, two fleets were drawn up in two parallel lines, one was consequently to the windward of the other. Both the windward and leeward fleets possessed several special advantages over each other. The advantages and disadvantages were as follows: The fleet to windward



could approach the leeward fleet at pleasure, and could therefore determine the time of commencement of action. If the weather fleet was more numerous, it might send down a detachment of ships on the rear of the leeward fleet, and thus put it to confusion. If any of the ships of the fleet to leeward became disabled, the windward fleet could easily send down its fire-ships upon them, or send a detachment after any part giving way. The weather fleet could also board if the admiral thought proper. Again, the windward fleet was but little inconvenienced by the smoke carried to the leeward fleet by the wind.

There were, however, disadvantages for the windward fleet. First, an inability to quit the fight, when once engaged, without passing through the enemy's line, which was extremely dangerous, because ships already damaged became much more so if obliged to fly; and as they were powerless to form an order of retreat, this manœuvre was only resorted to under desperate circumstances. If the fleet to windward tacked altogether, in order to get off, the leeward line could do the same (after having raked the weather ships in stays) by following them on the other tack, with the advantage of having gained the wind of the centre and rear divisions of the flying line. If a fresh wind was blowing, weather ships seldom had their lower deck guns sufficiently elevated; consequently, if the ship was a little inclined on the lee side, the guns often ran out again at their ports after they were fired, thus

retarding the service of the artillery, as the guns had to be bowsed in again every time to be loaded, and very often no use could be made of the lower tier. Again, ships thus disabled to such an extent as to force them to leave the line could not easily do so, because in veering, for want of being able to tack, they fell between the two lines, where they were raked ahead, and so completely reduced to disorder. Were they, however, fortunate enough to complete their evolution, it was still very difficult for them, disabled as they were, to get to windward of their line, and very often they fell foul of the next ships astern of them, which scarcely had it in their power to prevent the accident, owing to the fire and smoke, especially if the line were much contracted. Even should they perceive it and try to avoid being fouled by falling back on their next ship astern, and so on successively, it often happened that owing to a large part of the fleet being obliged to manœuvre from one to the other their fire lessened, and very often ceased, because they covered each other ; so, should the enemy take advantage of this critical moment, disorder increased, and everything was lost. These results, however, could be partly prevented if the disabled ships were quickly towed out of the line by the boats of the fleet which, for that purpose, were supposed to be hoisted out from each ship before the engagement began. Otherwise, if the ships in the weather line (not being too close) had the necessary space to observe what

passed ahead of them, and to manœuvre, they ranged themselves to leeward of the disabled ship, in order to cover her and approach nearer to the enemy, while all the other ships should bear up together in order to preserve the line.

The ships in the line to leeward had the advantage of serving with facility and effect their lower-deck guns in all weathers suitable for fleets to come into action ; they could also quit the engagement at pleasure, their disabled ships being able without difficulty to leave their stations when necessity required. Again, they could form the order of retreat with more readiness, or continue the action as long as convenient. In short, the lee line of battle, when superior in number, could double the enemy by compelling some of the ships in the van or rear to tack, thus putting one of the extremities of the enemy's line between two fires, and did they form in time they could cannonade the enemy while bearing down to the attack.

The disadvantage of the fleet to leeward lay in its being very much annoyed by the smoke, a continued shower of fire from the wads falling on board when repelled by the wind. This often resulted in dreadful consequences. The ships of the line to leeward could not attempt to board those of the other line ; in fact, they could do little more than accept the battle, and could determine neither time nor distance. It was with great difficulty that they could avoid being boarded, or prevent their line from being broken, if

that was the aim of the enemy. Their fire-ships also were seldom of use. Of course it was impossible to lay down a general rule for the adoption of either the weather or lee gauge. Sometimes the one was preferable, sometimes the other; and often it was not in the commander-in-chief's power to exercise an option.

During an engagement the greatest silence was enforced on each ship, no man being allowed to leave his post under pain of death; if any one refused to obey an officer he was put to death on the spot. The same punishment was inflicted on any one who hid himself or feigned to be wounded. The wounded were carried or conducted to the surgeon by special men told off by the captain for that purpose. Should any one discover a man taking undue advantage of this he was to inform the nearest officer. No one was allowed to touch the rigging except under orders. If the water line of the ship were struck by any dangerous shot, the caulkers, carpenters, or any other person who perceived it, at once had to inform the captain; but on no account was such information given to any one else on board (unless to a superior officer), under pain of death; the same precaution also was observed in the case of a ship catching fire. A captain could not quit his post in the line upon any pretence whatever, unless his ship was so greatly damaged as to render her incapable of continuing the action. The fleet being under little sail, the ships, when damaged in their

rigging, &c., generally had time enough to repair their defects, without causing an unnecessary interruption in the line, by withdrawing out of action at a time when their aid might be of the utmost importance to the rest of the fleet.

When a fleet was so far superior in number as to be able to extend itself both ahead and astern considerably beyond the enemy's line, the admiral generally formed a reserve squadron, which was drawn up in a line on the other side of the fleet with respect to the enemy. If the reserve was to windward, the ships composing it were drawn up in a line with the frigates nearest abreast of the centre, but if to leeward, a little ahead of them ; care being taken at the same time to keep in such a position as to be able to distinctly observe all the signals and movements of the fleet, and to be in readiness to replace any ship or ships which happened to be dismasted or driven out of the line. (In this case all gaps in the line had to be properly strengthened and carefully filled up again without loss of time.)

The reserve was usually formed at the same time as the line, in order to prevent any irregularity which might happen by leaving any gaps. The admiral, however, could draw ships out of the line to form a reserve, according to the time and circumstances of his position. When any captain in the fleet thought he could board with success one of the enemy's ships, he signalled to the admiral by hoisting the boarding flag, together with his particular pendant, to be more plainly



distinguished. The admiral, in return, made the proper signal of approbation ; or, did he disapprove of the attempt, he let fly that ship's particular pendant, that she might observe the signal the better. The captain was not to make this signal without first well considering the ill consequences that might attend such an attempt in case of failure, for the breaking of the order of the line by quitting his post might be of much greater disadvantage to the whole fleet than any advantage from his personal victory, except in the case of an enemy's flag-ship.

On some occasions neither Rooke nor Shovel, doughty upholders of the Flag though they were, could accomplish all that was expected of them, but their occasional failures may be attributed mainly to the unreasonableness of the instructions they received, and the neglect of the Admiralty to provide them with the ships and the men requisite to carry out their orders. Of course there were times when, in spite of press-gangs, the difficulty of manning our ships was immense. For example, in February, 1703, there was a general embargo on all shipping, it being ordered that no ship outward bound should proceed on her voyage till she had furnished Her Majesty's ships with one-fourth of the trader's crew, while those vessels not "cleared" were to supply half of their number of sailors "for the more speedy and effectual manning of the fleet."

Gaps in the ranks of our seamen were caused not merely in battle with the enemy but by the perils of

the sea. In the winter of the same year—1703—a night storm of appalling violence cost the nation the lives of over 1,500 seamen. The fleet lost a dozen ships on various parts of the coast; others escaped complete wreck almost by a miracle. On land also thunder and lightning, accompanying the fury of the gale, made the storm memorable for many a year, and did damage in London and Westminster that was estimated to exceed £1,000,000.

Even costlier, in one sense, to the nation was that dire storm of 1707, in which Sir Cloudesley Shovel and some 800 seamen perished on the rocks of the Scilly Islands. Young Vernon himself was serving on the *Phœnix*. His ship went to pieces, but he and all the crew were almost miraculously saved. The Admiral's ship—the *Association*—and the *Phœnix* were not the only vessels lost. The *Romney* and the *Firebrand* were broken up. The *St. George* escaped, being refloated by the same great wave that drowned the lights of the *Association*. "Thus," says Bishop Burnet, referring to Admiral Shovel, "one of the greatest seamen of the age was lost by an error in his own profession, and a great misreckoning; for (as I have already observed) he had lain by all the afternoon before, and set sail at night, believing the next morning he would have time enough to guard against running on the rocks. Sir George Byng's fleet was not half a mile to windward at the time, and Byng saw the breaches of the sea, and, soon after, the rocks



of Scilly above water. It was on one of the rocks known by the name of 'the Bishop and his Clerks' that the Admiral struck, and in less than two minutes there was not anything of his ship seen. The ship on which Sir George Byng wore his flag was providentially saved, chiefly by his own presence of mind, in this imminent danger, even when one of the rocks was almost under her main chains."

According to the monument in Westminster Abbey the body of Sir Cloudesley Shovel was flung on shore, and buried with others in the sands. Nevertheless it was said, and widely credited, that the gallant commander reached the shore alive, but was robbed and murdered by a woman belonging to the gang of wreckers who infested the Scilly Islands at that period. The body, which had been stripped, lay buried for three days, before, by royal command, it was taken up, embalmed, and reinterred in Westminster Abbey at the Queen's expense. It stands to the honour of Anne's memory that she showed such reverend regard for a great and gallant seaman. It was said of Cloudesley Shovel that few men lived more beloved or died more lamented. "His fate," says the inscription on the Abbey monument, "was lamented by all; but especially the seafaring part of the nation, to whom he was a worthy example." And, assuredly, every Englishman on land or sea to-day should honour the memory of the gallant cabin-boy who ultimately became Rear-Admiral of England, Admiral of the

White, Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Fleet, Elder Brother of the Trinity House, and one of the Governors of Greenwich Hospital. When Queen Anne conferred one of the vacant offices on Sir John Leake, she declared that his appointment was necessary to repair the loss of the ablest seaman in her service.

Leake, his successor, is no longer a name familiar to the Navy or to the nation, but Sir John was a brave man and a splendid sailor. He sat in Parliament for Rochester, but was more at home on board a ship than at the Admiralty Board or in the House of Commons. Entick quaintly sums up the old Admiral in these terms :—

“Sir John Leake was of a middle stature, well-set and strong, a little inclined to corpulency, but not so as to incommode him in the least. His complexion was florid, his countenance open, but eye sharp and piercing, and his address both graceful and manly, denoting both the military<sup>1</sup> man and the gentleman. As he had a good person, he had also a good constitution, hardly ever knowing what it was to be sick ; and though he took his bottle freely, as was the custom in his time in the fleet, yet he was never disgraced (*sic*), or impaired his health by it. . . . His passions, though strong, were governed by the dictates of ‘right reason,’ and never betrayed him into any indecencies. . . . In short, as to his person and natural qualities he was what physicians define a perfect man, namely, he had a sound mind in a sound body. . . . He was certainly one of the best seamen the Island has produced.”

It will be seen presently that, towards the end of his career, Vernon gave the Admiralty the benefit of his

<sup>1</sup> The term “military” frequently was applied to the older line of admirals. In effect they were generals as well as sea-commanders.

experience and judgment as to the treatment of British seamen and the right method of manning the fleet. This same vital question had engaged the shrewd thoughts of Daniel Defoe, and the result was to be read and studied—as, doubtless, Vernon studied it—in the “*Essay on Projects*,” which was published in 1697, the year in which James Vernon became Secretary of State, and only a few years before his son entered the Navy.

Alert in mind, precise in detail, and vigorous and quaint in expression, Defoe dealt with a multiplicity of subjects in this first book of his. He had something wise and witty to say about Banks, Friendly Societies, Pensions, Rogues, Fools, and Bankrupts. Last, but not least, he had much that was practical to say about Seamen. He had observed that whenever the kingdom was at war with any of its neighbours the question of manning the Navy became one of paramount importance and difficulty, and that the method of dragging men violently into the service was attended with “sundry ill circumstances.”

Our preparations were constantly retarded. Our fleets were always late for want of men, and a bitter aversion was engendered in the minds of those who were specially liable to the oppression of the press-gang. The loss occasioned to national trade by this system had reached enormous proportions. Coal merchants who formerly paid 36s. a

voyage to common seamen had to pay as much as £9 a voyage during war-time, and in other branches of maritime trade wages had more than doubled, while the insolence of seamen had increased in proportion. They were "not now to be pleased with any provisions, will admit no half-pay, and command of the captains even what they please ; nay, the King himself can hardly please them." To reform all this Defoe's Project elaborated a system of registration under statutory authority for every one connected with the sea-service—seamen, midshipmen, officers, pilots, old men, and pensioners—whose rate of wages, he said, should be fixed on a sliding scale, with the right to work for themselves when placed on half-pay. No sailor would then desert, because he could not be lawfully employed except through the one Government department, and at the same time the press-gang would be superseded.

If a fleet or squadron were to be fitted out the ships could be manned in a week's time, for all the seamen of England would be on the register and liable to serve. Moreover, they would be *willing* to serve if assured of a fair wage ; "for," said the author, "it is not the fear of danger which makes our seamen lurk and hide and hang back in time of war, but it is wages is the matter : 24s. per month in the King's service, and 40s. to 50s. per month from the merchant, is the true cause ; and the seaman is in the right, too ; for who would serve his King and country, and

fight and be knocked on the head at 24s. a month, that can have 50s. without that hazard?"

With many shrewd comments and practical hints Defoe gave forth his project, and there left it, not very hopefully, but "rather wishing than expecting to see it undertaken." In other words, Daniel Defoe was far too wise to expect wisdom on the part of the Admiralty.

The power of impressing seafaring men for the sea-service by the King's commission always was a matter of dispute, and submitted to with great reluctance. Sir Michael Foster, a great legal authority, showed, however, that the practice of impressing, and granting powers to the Admiralty for that purpose, was of very ancient date, and was uniformly continued by a regular series or precedents for many centuries, whence he concluded it to be part of the common law. But no statutes expressly declared this power to be in the Crown, though many of them strongly implied it.

The statute 2 Ric. II. c. 4 spoke of mariners being arrested, and retained for the King's service, as of a well-known thing, and practised without dispute, and provided a remedy against their running away. By a later statute, if any waterman, who used the river Thames, hid himself during the execution of any commission of pressing for the King's service, he was liable to heavy penalties. By another statute (5 Eliz. c. 5) no fisherman could be taken by the Queen's commission to serve as a mariner except the commission



was first brought before two justices of the peace living near the sea-coast where the mariners were taken, in order that the justices might choose and return such a number of able-bodied men as were contained in the commission to serve Her Majesty. By other statutes special protection was granted to seamen in particular circumstances. Ferrymen also were said to be privileged by common law from being impressed. All this implies most certainly that a power of impressing existed somewhere ; and, if anywhere, from the spirit of the constitution of early times, as well as from the frequent mention of the King's commission, it must have been vested in the Crown alone. After all, however, this method of manning the Navy was considered as only defensible from public necessity, to which all private considerations had to give way.

The following persons were expressly exempt from being impressed : Apprentices for three years, the master, mate, and carpenter, and one man for every hundred tons, of vessels employed in the coal trade ; all under eighteen years of age and above fifty-five ; foreigners in merchant-ships and privateers ; landsmen who betook themselves to sea for two years ; seamen who were in the Greenland fishery, and harpooners, employed, during the interval of the fishing season, in the coal trade, if they could give security to go to the fishing in the following season.

The old law reports contain some interesting

decisions on this subject. Thus: A man was not excused from impressment by reason of his being headborough of the place in which he resided. *Semble*, there are no exemptions, except by statute, and, perhaps, in the case of ferrymen (*Fox, ex parte*, 5 Term Rep. 276; 2 R. R. 596).

On application by the master, Lord Mansfield, C.J., granted a writ of *habeas corpus* to bring before him certain apprentices alleged to have been wrongly impressed (*The Apprentices Case*, 1 Leach, C. C. 203).

Impressment of seamen is legal (*Case of Pressing Mariners*, 18 St. Tr. 1,326).

A seaman is not exempt from impressment because he is a freeholder (*Rex v. Douglas*, 5 East, 477).

A Lord Mayor's waterman is not exempt (*Rex v. Tubbs*, Cowp. 517).

In a note on the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, Mr. Alexander Pulling (author of "The Shipping Code") says :—

"Speaking generally, all seafaring persons, including watermen, are liable to impressment, which power is not statutory, though recognised and restricted by statute. See 13 Geo. II. c. 17, the Naval Enlistment Act, 1835 (5 and 6 William IV. c. 24). See also the Naval Enlistment Act, 1884 (47 and 48 Vict. c. 46.)"

It may be added to this information, which at the present day is calculated to cause some surprise, that the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894 (sect. 195), expressly declares that a seaman may leave his ship for



the purpose of forthwith entering the naval service, and in that case shall not by so leaving be deemed to have deserted "or otherwise be liable to any punishment or forfeiture whatever."

The state of political parties, in Vernon's day, as in our own, was constantly acting and reacting on the efficiency of the Navy, but the position of affairs at the period under notice contained elements of special historical interest. It was in the same year—1701—that Henry St. John, afterwards Lord Bolingbroke, first entered Parliament, taking his seat for Wotton Bassett, a family borough. He soon became an able and vigorous lieutenant of Robert Harley, the Tory leader of the day. Later, he took an active part in the impeachment of Somers, Montague, and others for their conduct in respect to the Partition Treaties. Later still he justified those treaties, and pleaded that his earlier attitude was due to ignorance.

In the same year another significant event occurred. The dethroned King James II. died at St. Germain, a pensioner of France, on September 6, 1701. His son, then a boy of thirteen, was destined to become known as the Old Pretender, whose claim to the Throne of England served for many years to sap the loyalty of a large number of Englishmen to their reigning Sovereign. The young Pretender, with whose fortunes Bolingbroke later on associated himself, carried on the same traditions and maintained the like mischievous influence in the country until 1746, the

year of Culloden, in which, as will be seen presently, Edward Vernon rendered such signal, but ill-rewarded, services in checking the great scheme for a French invasion.

The death of King William III. in 1702 of course made a vast difference to the political fortunes of his Secretary of State. James Vernon went out of office. The swing of the pendulum brought other notable men into prominence. St. John has already been mentioned. He was Secretary for War when Harley was Secretary of State; that is to say, in 1704. Four years later the Whigs had another innings. They came into power under Marlborough and Godolphin. St. John was succeeded by Robert Walpole, in whom he had already discovered a young and dangerous rival. Again, in 1710, the Whigs were out and the Tories returned to power. With them St. John came back, this time as Secretary of State. The Tories wanted to end the war with France. The Whigs wished to continue it, lest there should be a reaction presently in favour of the Pretender. St. John became very active in the peace negotiations, and he was now a great power. Presently he used his majority in the Commons to secure the expulsion of Walpole, who was imprisoned in the Tower upon charges of corruption. When St. John obtained a peerage, his father, well acquainted with his Jacobite predilections, remarked, "Well, Harry, I said you would be hanged, but now I see you'll be beheaded."

Bolingbroke left the House of Commons in dudgeon. He hated Harley, and, behold! Harley was made Earl of Oxford, while he himself was created merely Viscount Bolingbroke and Baron St. John. He hoped and waited for a reaction, with a return to greater power and advance to higher rank. But it never came. When Queen Anne died in 1714 the fruit was not ripe. When George I., son of the Electress Sophia, came to the Throne, Bolingbroke's chances in England were gone for ever. A little later he escaped to France, in disguise as valet of a Frenchman, thus averting risks of fulfilment of the paternal prediction. He now became Secretary of State to the Pretender, a position of much mortification, which must have been greatly aggravated as time went on by seeing his young rival, Robert Walpole, steadily advancing to a position of immense authority.

And Walpole, as the years went on, was destined to become the powerful, but not always victorious, enemy of Edward Vernon. The youthful naval officer was learning to serve his King and country in the fire and smoke of battle and amid the perils of the sea, while all these home-staying men were piling words on words in Parliament and juggling for their own ends with the vast inheritance committed to their keeping.

In 1703 King Charles of Spain came to England on a visit to Queen Anne. The visit seems to have been attended with a remarkable display of regal

ceremony and naval pomp. In the naval ceremonial it was Edward Vernon's fortune to participate. King Charles, as yet, was not in possession of the throne on which England wished to see him securely seated. A great many people thought that Philip I. was, and ought to be recognised as, Spain's rightful sovereign. But Charles was our man, and when His Majesty arrived at Portsmouth the Queen sent first the Duke of Somerset and then her royal consort, Prince George, to welcome the illustrious visitor and bring him on to Windsor Castle.

"The Court was very splendid and much thronged; the Queen's behaviour to him was very noble and obliging; the young King charmed all that were there. He had a dignity beyond his age, tempered with much modesty. His behaviour was in all points so exact that there was not a circumstance in his whole deportment that was liable to censure. He paid an extraordinary respect to the Queen, and yet maintained a due greatness in it. He had an art of seeming well pleased with everything, without so much as once smiling, all the while he was at Court (which was only three days). He spoke but little, and all he said was judicious and obliging. He took leave of Her Majesty the evening before his departure, having made several presents to several ladies attending Her Majesty's person."

If the King himself did not smile, perhaps it is difficult for the reader to abstain from doing so in the face of so resolutely flattering, yet negative, an account of His Majesty's demeanour. Evidently he knew what to do and how to do it, if we may judge from his adroit and substantial flattery of the Duchess or Marlborough, "to whom, in a polite manner, he gave

his ring from his finger, said to be valued at a thousand pounds." Thus did His Majesty approve himself "a most accomplished Prince to a most discerning and polite Court."

To Sir George Rooke (in whose flagship Vernon was serving) was entrusted the honour of conveying His Catholic Majesty to his own country. The French Navy was then in considerable strength, and it would have been extremely satisfactory to the King of France if Charles could have been intercepted and captured on the high seas. Rooke, on the other hand, was most anxious to put his illustrious passenger safely ashore, and also, if possible, to prevent a junction of the French squadrons then sheltering respectively at Brest and Toulon. To avoid the dangers of delay the British squadron left Portsmouth Harbour without waiting for a number of ships that were intended to be ready, but which, according to custom, were not ready for that service. Contrary winds caused some delay, but Rooke brought his ships safely to Lisbon river. The *Royal Catherine*, with His Majesty on board, came up and anchored before the palace of the King of Portugal amid the thunder of saluting guns.

Great ceremony was observed in the meeting of the King of Spain and the King of Portugal on board the British warship. The latter king was received by His Catholic Majesty at the ladder-head. When the two monarchs went ashore together the British Admiral gave them two salutes of twenty-five guns each, which

were followed by the guns of the rest of the fleet. The two kings landed under a triumphal arch of great splendour. They crossed the bridge to the palace, where, in the royal chapel, a *Te Deum* was sung in thanksgiving for the safe arrival of King Charles.

Before leaving the *Royal Catherine* His Majesty had bestowed more presents. Sir George Rooke received a sword, the hilt of which was set with diamonds, "a buckle on a hatband, and a hook to cock up a hat, set with diamonds." Young Vernon, among other officers, received a hundred guineas and a ring from His Majesty's hand. All this munificence, however, is rather qualified by a postscript to the story, which suggests that Queen Anne had made His Majesty a present of £50,000.

On the 20th of October, 1708, died His Royal Highness George, Prince of Denmark, who was, and never ought to have been, Lord High Admiral of Great Britain. The chronicler declares that having been for some years "pretty much indisposed," the affairs of the Admiralty were for the most part administered by the Prince's Council. George of Denmark, beyond dispute, was one of the dullest and least interesting of Princes. The irony of historical events had made him the nominal head of the British Navy, but it may be truly said that whatever naval achievements belong to the period of his figure-head authority were brought about not by the aid of his talents, but in spite of his incapacity.



Queen Anne herself made a far more capable "Lord High Admiral" both in 1702 and after her consort's death. After a short interval, however, the appointment was conferred on the Earl of Pembroke.

It was in the same year that the merchants of Bristol revived their ancient thirst for discovery, closely coupled with commercial advantage. These adventurous spirits fitted out two ships—the *Duke* and the *Duchess*—to cruise in the South Seas under the command of Captains Woodes Rogers and William Dampier. It was in the course of this cruise that Rogers landed a party on the lonely island of Juan Fernandez, which lies in the Pacific Ocean some 400 miles west of Chili. The boats returned towards evening bringing a man clothed in goatskins who appeared wilder than the goats themselves. He seemed able to remember only a few words of English, having been four years and four months on the island without having any one to speak to. He could hardly reconcile himself to the ship's victuals, and even preferred water to the dram that was hospitably offered to him. This strange being was none other than Alexander Selkirk, and all the wonders that he achieved on the lonely island, and more also, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of "Robinson Crusoe"? When brought to England, Mr. Selkirk imparted his experiences to Daniel Defoe, intending to profit from the publication of his memoirs. "But that honest writer," says a caustic critic, "stole the



materials, which he gave to the public under the title of 'Robinson Crusoe.' "

Excellent as were the services rendered by Vernon in the Baltic and elsewhere under Sir Cloudesley Shovel, it is to the West Indies that we must look for the principal scene of his activities. There, at the period referred to, England's interests and those of her American colonies had become vitally affected. A cause of infinite trouble was the Scots Settlement on the Isthmus of Darien. This narrow tract, uniting the two great continents of North and South America, though never conquered by the Spaniards, was regarded by them as their own special and peculiar field of influence and profit. Every possible device was resorted to by Spain (even when she was supposed to be at peace with this country) to drive the Scots traders away from the territory of their choice. The canny Scot, however, declined to move. He had made a good bargain with the native owners, and he meant to reap its full advantages. The Home Government, with hands full of other urgent matters in the reign of William, were disposed to think the Scots Settlement gave more trouble than it was worth. It even appears that secret orders were sent to the Governor of Jamaica to leave the Darien Settlement severely alone and to refrain from supplying the Scotsmen with provisions. But so much disturbance followed, and English shipping continued to suffer so heavily at the hands of Spain, that from time to time expeditions had

to be sent to the West Indies, in order to protect our trade, awe the Spaniards, and check the ever-increasing onslaughts of the pirates.

To accomplish the last-mentioned object the British Government had adopted an extraordinary course, and thereby brought upon William and his Ministers vehement and indignant reproaches. On the principle of "set a thief to catch a thief," a commission under the Great Seal actually was given to the notorious Captain Kidd, himself the prince of pirates, to put down piracy in the West Indies. Kidd sailed with a crew of 150 men in a ship called, not inappropriately, the *Adventure*. He, at any rate, knew what he was about, if British Ministers did not. His first important capture was an English merchantman, of the class he was specially commissioned to protect. To this ship he promptly transferred his crew. By that time he had a very mixed ship's company—Dutchmen, Moors, and others, doughty cut-throats every one of them. For some time Kidd had a free hand, and used it with the greatest possible advantage for himself and the scoundrels he commanded. But, the Government having sent Kidd after the pirates, found it necessary later on to send an expedition after Kidd. It was not easy to catch the alert buccaneer, but ultimately he was seized at Boston—with which town, as with New York, he had lucrative business relations! Lord Bellamont, who was then Governor of New York and of New England, held Kidd a prisoner until he could be conveyed to England.

Meanwhile it was moved in the House of Commons, "That the Letters Patent granted to the Earl of Bellamont and others of Pirates' Goods were dishonourable to the King, against the law of nations, contrary to the laws and statutes of this realm, an invasion of property and destruction of commerce." Somers, the Lord Keeper, the First Commissioner of the Admiralty, and others, were accused of countenancing piracy, and, worse still, of having a pecuniary interest in Kidd's exploits. Undoubtedly party enmity had much to do with the attack, and it was hoped through Kidd to strike with overwhelming effect at the advisers of the Crown. The arch-pirate, who was known as the "wizard of the seas," was ordered to be brought to the bar of the House of Commons. There the robber and perpetrator of murderous outrages in remote seas cut but a very poor figure. It may be that he pretended to be more stupid than he really was, but, at any rate, there were no disclosures that could help the enemies of the Government to prove the supposed guilt of Ministers.

Later on Kidd and a man called Darby Mullins, his lieutenant in various piratical exploits, were tried and convicted at the Old Bailey. They were hanged at Execution Dock, on May 23, 1701. The rope that suspended Kidd broke, and he fell to the ground, and in the interval between that attempt and completion of the execution the ordinary solemnly admonished the

doomed man, who is said to have admitted in that extreme moment the justice of his punishment.

Such were some of the sensational events that preceded and led up to Vernon's first voyage to the West Indies. They afford a useful key to the difficult position with which, presently, he was called upon to deal. It was not only with the Spaniards that England had to reckon. The French had cast covetous eyes on our North American Colonies, particularly the province of Carolina. It was here that M. Iberville, with a considerable force, made a descent. He summoned the Governor of Charlestown to surrender to the King of France, giving him one hour for his decision. The Governor, Sir Henry Johnston, replied that that was much too long, as he did not want half a minute to resolve on doing his duty, and that the English were not to be alarmed by words, but were quite prepared for blows. Iberville's forces thereupon opened an attack, but met with so vigorous a repulse that they were glad enough to retreat, with a loss of 300 killed, wounded, or made prisoners.

But in the wide expanse of waters which washed England's colonial possessions the privateers of France still did considerable damage to British shipping. The Admiralty had to listen to many complaints and remonstrances, and presently a new expedition to the West Indies was entrusted to the command of Commodore Wager. For the security of the Island of Jamaica one ship was to be left in the harbour of Port

Royal ; two frigates were to patrol the sea off Carthage and Porto-Bello in order to suppress the privateers, and the remainder of the fleet was to cruise off the coast of Cuba.

Wager presently got on the track of some Spanish treasure-ships, which were believed to have on board 48,000,000 Pieces of Eight. To have captured those vessels would have been a magnificent *coup*, for both Spain and France at that time were in serious financial straits—so low, indeed, was their credit that their mint bills were at 30 or 40 per cent. discount. Wager certainly made some important captures, but many of the Spanish galleons managed to escape.

Vernon, as captain of the *Jersey*, vigorously seconded the Commodore's enterprising efforts. He captured a Spanish sloop laden with tobacco, and re-took from the French a Guinea ship with 400 negroes on board. His activity was in marked contrast with that of the captains of two other ships who ultimately were tried by court martial and convicted of negligence. Later on, still in command of the *Jersey*, Vernon captured another French ship, carrying 30 guns and 120 men, and carried his prize to Jamaica. Yet another capture was made by him on the north-west coast of Cuba. These services on the West Indian stations were continuous for a period of three years. Towards the end of that time the Congress of Utrecht was in progress, and at length a proclamation for a cessation of arms reached Jamaica.

Captain Vernon then returned to England, not knowing that in a few years' time he would have to renew his active services in the same seas under conditions even more arduous than those hitherto imposed upon him.

Towards the end of the reign of Queen Anne naval affairs were the subject of renewed controversy. In June, 1711, in the House of Commons, it was complained with regard to the debts of the Navy that much of the money voted for that special service had been diverted to other purposes, and, in particular, that a sum of £606,806 had been wrongfully expended on the land forces. This unjustifiable proceeding, it was urged, had been "a discouragement to the seamen, occasioned the paying of extravagant rates upon contracts, and had very much contributed to sink the credit of the Navy." At the same time attention was called to notorious embezzlements and scandalous abuses in the victualling departments, complaints which, undoubtedly, were only too well founded. Nor were such irregularities peculiar to that period. In 1689, the same year in which rewards were distributed for the services of the Navy in Bantry Bay, great mortality was caused among the seamen of the Fleet, owing to the unwholesome food served out by the Victualling Commissioners. The press-gang, the cat-o'-nine-tails, and poisonous rations were features of naval life which year after year continued to militate against the popularity of the British Navy.



Bishop Burnet, who knew what was going on behind the scenes, records the fact that the victualling abuses in question were notorious, but connived at :—

“Some have said that the captains’ tables were kept out of the gain made in it. Yet a member of the House who was a Whig was complained of for this and expelled the House, and a prosecution was ordered against him. But the abuse goes on still as avowedly as ever. Here was a show of zeal and a seeming discovery of fraudulent practices by which the nation was deceived.”

After the Peace of Utrecht was signed in 1713, there were a good many critics of the conditions of the Grand Alliance. In particular, that biting critic, Jonathan Swift, fell foul of the articles which bound England to safeguard the interests of Portugal :—

“Besides the honour of being convoys and guards-in-ordinary to the Portuguese ships and coasts, we are to guess the enemy’s thoughts, and to take the King of Portugal’s word whenever he hath a fancy that he shall be invaded. We are also to furnish him with a strength superior to what the enemy intends to invade any of his dominions with, let that be what it will. . . . His Portuguese Majesty is sole judge of what is strength superior, and what will be able to prevent an invasion, and may send our fleets wherever he pleases. . . . These fleets must be subject likewise to his Viceroys, Admirals, and Governors . . . which I believe is an indignity that was never offered before, except to a conquered nation.”

Amid all the strife of tongues the distracted Queen fell ill. “She died of a lethargic disorder” on August 1, 1714. At Portsmouth a prominent citizen was arrested by the military governor for spreading early news of Her Majesty’s demise,—which led to the proverbial use of the inquiry: “Is it true that Queen Anne’s dead?”



## CHAPTER V

King George I. arrives in England—the “Maypole” and the “Elephant”—Dean Swift and his friends out of favour—£100,000 offered for the apprehension of the Pretender—A schoolmaster flogged—A futile fleet in the North—Captain Vernon and the expedition to the Baltic—The Czar as admiral—Captain Delgarno and the pirate ship—Quarrel with Sweden—Byng’s squadron in the Mediterranean—Fight off Cape Passaro—Spanish ships captured by Captain Walton—Spain retaliates—Intended invasion of Britain—The Quadruple Alliance—Russia’s oppression of the Swedes—British squadron sent to the Baltic—Vernon commands a fifty-gun ship—Pirate squadron in the West Indies—Successful stratagem of Captain Ogle—Fifty-two pirates executed—Captain Vernon enters Parliament—Effect of the South Sea Bubble—Law and the Mississippi Scheme—The Navy debt—The way the money went—Peculation in high places—The King spends six months in Hanover—His Majesty asks for more seamen—Naval demonstration against Russia—Spaniards besiege Gibraltar—Death of George I.

CAPTAIN VERNON was in England when Queen Anne died, but as he was never a time-server or place-hunter, the event could not have affected him personally as it affected many prominent servants of the Crown. Of a truth the political doves were terribly fluttered. “Had the Queen lasted a month longer; had the

English Tories been as bold and resolute as they were clever and crafty; had the Prince whom the nation loved and pitied been equal to his fortune, George Louis had never talked German in St. James's Chapel Royal." Thus the author of "The Four Georges." But as events turn out, it is George Louis of Hanover who receives the Crown of "his ancestors." A Dutch and British squadron, commanded by the Earl of Berkeley, convoys the new monarch to his new kingdom, and presently, at Greenwich Pier, his Grace of Canterbury is prostrating himself in all loyalty before the "head of the Church." His Grace of Marlborough—"he who betrayed King William, betrayed King James II., betrayed Queen Anne"—he, too, is kneeling before the rising sun of royalty, and with him Oxford and Bolingbroke and many another political star of magnitude. It, says Thackeray, Swift had not been committed to the statesmen of the losing side, what a fine satirical picture we might have had of that general *Sauve que peut* amongst the Tory party.

Assuredly the pen that wrote "A Meditation on a Broomstick" might well have found further scope for satire in A Meditation on a "Maypole!" Such was the nickname of the long, lean German lady, who for her virtues was presently created Duchess of Kendal. And there was that other royal favourite, known as "the Elephant," who also followed King George, and condescended presently to accept an English title, as Countess of Darlington. Swift, in his mysterious love

affairs with Stella and Vanessa, showed, at any rate, that he knew how to appreciate beauty in a woman. What must he have thought of these plain and elderly favourites from Hanover? But the great Dean was no longer in close touch with Court and courtiers. The clouds of disfavour were closing about him. To be a High Churchman was to be regarded as a friend of the Pretender and a foe to King George. Swift and his friends, therefore, were to experience the irony of fate, as summed up by Bolingbroke—the brilliant but unstable statesman, who was now kept waiting at the door of the Council Chamber with his bag and papers—when he exclaimed: “What a world is this, and how does fortune banter us!”

The House of Commons now voted £100,000 reward to be paid by the Treasury to any person who should apprehend the Pretender, in landing or attempting to land in any part of the British dominions, and the Pretender's real or supposed friends were made to experience in divers ways the disfavours of fickle fortune. The unfortunate schoolmaster who dared to say what many thought, viz., that King George had no right to the Crown, was tried and then flogged through the city with such brutality that in a few days he died from the effects of the punishment. While they flogged the Jacobite schoolmaster, the new Ministers impeached their Tory enemies in the House of Lords, and showed to a disgusted nation the heights, or depths, of rancorous animosity to which party spirit

could be carried. What was loyalty in one reign was treason in the next !

The violent measures of the Government provoked the subsequent rising under the Earl of Mar, and stirred the embers of discontent throughout the kingdom. It cannot be said that the naval arm rendered any practical assistance in checking the operations of Mar and his followers, although a strong squadron under Sir John Jennings was sent to the Forth. The sea-coast thereabouts was in the hands of the Jacobites. Some 1,500 of the rebels, under cover of darkness, made good their passage to the shore of Lothian, thus crossing an arm of the sea some sixteen miles broad, through the midst of King George's cruisers, after previously fooling the admiral by marches and counter-marches along the coast for the purpose of concealing their intended point of embarkation.

King George, soon after his arrival from Hanover, which was in September, 1714, made various changes at the Admiralty. Among the officers who were not displaced was Sir John Norris, Admiral of the Blue, under whose command Captain Vernon served in the Baltic, in the expedition of 1715.

The squadron had no special opportunity to distinguish itself; the Swedes, who had been interfering with our trade, speedily retired to their ports, and the most picturesque incident of the expedition was the appearance of Czar Peter at sea as Commander-in-Chief, carrying his imperial flag at the head of

the united fleets of Great Britain, Denmark, and Holland.

The early years of King George's reign furnish a period of land, rather than of sea, history. Barbary pirates, however, were showing an objectionable spirit of enterprise in the Mediterranean. A British squadron under Admiral Baker did something to check their operations, but the pluck and persistency of Captain Delgarno of H.M.S. *Hind*, who had but 20 guns at his disposal, did a great deal more. Delgarno encountered one of the most powerful vessels in the pirate fleet, carrying 24 guns, and after a fierce engagement lasting nearly three hours, compelled her to strike. The captured ship, however, had been so mauled in the fight that she presently sank with nearly all her crew.

Later, in 1716, King George, as Elector of Hanover, having a quarrel on hand with King Charles of Sweden, obtained the consent of an accommodating Parliament to prohibit commerce with Sweden "during such time as His Majesty should think it necessary for the safety and peace of his kingdom." The proclamation that followed certainly proved highly injurious to the commercial interests of the kingdom, and the nation was put to the expense of sending another squadron to the Baltic. This squadron was placed under the command of Sir George Byng, but though the expedition cost a good deal of money, its services partook only of the nature of a naval parade.



In 1717 the pirates of the West Indies again were much in evidence, and a proclamation issued by royal authority offered various rewards for captures made by any of His Majesty's officers on sea or land ; but the money voted at that period for naval purposes was chiefly devoted to fitting out a formidable expedition under Byng. Byng's ships were sent to the Mediterranean, having as their ostensible object the maintenance of the neutrality of Italy "against those who should seek to disturb it." The expedition was, in fact, directed against the King of Spain, in consequence of his designs upon Sicily. When the British envoy politely presented to Cardinal Alberoni a list of the ships of the squadron, the Cardinal, who was Prime Minister of Spain, threw it on the ground with "great emotion," as one historian puts it ; "with much passion," according to another. A little later Byng sighted the Spanish Fleet, gave chase and defeated the Spaniards in a running fight off Cape Passaro. Captain Walton with five ships was detached to pursue a section of the Spanish squadron. Walton's report when received was as brief as it was satisfactory :—

"SIR,—We have taken and destroyed all the Spanish ships which were on the coast ; the number as per margin.

"I am, &c.,

"G. WALTON."

The schedule of this business-like despatch, which was dated *Canterbury*, off Syracuse, 16th of August,

1718, was extremely satisfactory. The gallant officer, in fact, had taken four warships, together with a bomb-ketch and a vessel laden with arms, and had burned four ships of the line, a fire-ship, and a bomb vessel. It was a striking example of the "brief style," which, as Ben Jonson said, "expresseth much in little." From a naval point of view all this was extremely gratifying, but undoubtedly the cart had been put before the horse, for we went to war before declaring it. Spain was bitterly incensed and humiliated, and when the war declaration came the British nation had an uneasy feeling that Ministers of the Crown, if not the King himself, had behaved badly.

Beyond question, however, Spain had treated British interests with gross injustice in various ways that affected our commerce and our prestige. Moreover, at the Spanish Court, further and bolder enterprises were in contemplation. Spain at that time was dominated by a woman and a priest. The Queen had procured the promotion of Alberoni, an abbot, to the position of Cardinal and Prime Minister, and Alberoni was bent on breaking the power of Italy and Austria. Spain was showing some signs of recovering the ground lost in the course of a century, and enormous preparations were in progress for the equipment of a powerful fleet. Alberoni hated England, but he showed his hate too soon. Spanish cruisers frequently brought into Spanish ports British merchant-ships bound for neutral ports and compelled them to unload their



cargoes. British seamen were forced to serve on Spanish warships, and our complaints and remonstrances met with no attention. Byng, therefore, did substantial justice to the interests of his country. After war was declared Spain actually made arrangements for landing a considerable body of troops on the west coast of England, but the expedition that set sail from Cadiz—not for the first time in the history of Spanish fleets intending to invade us—was defeated by a violent storm, this time without the assistance of our own Navy. Certain vessels, however, did reach the coast of Scotland, where Spanish troops and Highland Jacobites joined forces for purposes which proved entirely abortive. One feature of this episode was that pursuant to the terms of the Quadruple Alliance foreign troops were landed in England to assist our own. Two battalions of Switzers in the service of the States-General arrived in the Thames, and three Dutch battalions were put ashore in the North of England.

In February, 1720, the King of Spain acceded to the Quadruple Alliance, and shortly afterwards a treaty of friendship and alliance was concluded between England and Sweden, but the general cessation of hostilities left the power of the British Navy beyond all dispute. In the war of Sicily and the general affairs of Europe ours had been the dominant voice and the casting vote.

Russia's oppressive treatment of the Swedes in 1720 necessitated the despatch of another fleet to the

Baltic under Sir John Norris (in this fleet Captain Vernon commanded a fifty-gun ship), and so unmistakable were the intentions of the expedition that the Czar prudently moderated his programme. Peace was concluded between Russia and Sweden, and the British Fleet, having accomplished its purpose without firing a gun, left the Baltic and arrived at the Nore in October.

Thus came a respite from international conflict on the high seas, and our naval officers were able to pay some further attention to the pirates. Once again they were at work in the West Indies, and one of the boldest of the rovers, one Roberts, actually had under his command a compact squadron with an aggregate of 374 men and 96 guns. To Captain (afterwards Sir Chaloner) Ogle belongs the credit of putting an end to the depredations of this formidable buccaneer. Ogle, in command of the *Swallow*, caught the pirate fleet napping. Concealing his guns, he deceived Roberts into taking the *Swallow* for a merchant-ship. Ogle kept up the delusion by apparently making all sail to escape. One of the pirate ships gave chase, counting, doubtless, on an easy prize. But when the *Swallow* had drawn the pursuer many miles from her consorts, Ogle suddenly tacked, ran out his guns, and gave the pirate a broadside that so effectually damaged the ship and discouraged her crew as to lead to a speedy surrender. Ogle then returned to the bay in which Roberts and his other ships were lurking, carrying the

pirate's black flag with its death's head and cross-bones hoisted over the British Flag. The stratagem was completely successful. Concluding that the English vessel had been captured, Roberts and his ships came out into the open to celebrate the supposed victory. Ogle, however, gave them so unexpected and warm a reception, that, on Roberts himself being killed, his men surrendered, and the British captain, by and by, arrived at Cape Coast Castle with three prizes and nearly two hundred prisoners. Some seventy-four were capitally convicted, and fifty-two were executed. Their bodies were hung in chains on various parts of the coast as an object-lesson and by way of discouraging others. Thus piracy received a set-back for a considerable period.

Not long afterwards, Taylor, another notorious buccaneer, commanding a ship called the *Cassandra*, which had belonged to the East India Company, offered the Governor of Jamaica to surrender himself and his plunder, provided he received the King's pardon. The overture was rejected, but efforts made to capture the pirate were unsuccessful. The astute scoundrel took his wares to another market. The Spanish Governor of Porto-Bello received him on condition of receiving also a fourth part of his nefarious "savings," which were estimated to amount to £100,000.

At this period Captain Vernon, not being employed on active sea-service, was able to turn his attention to

the business of Parliament. In 1722 he was elected member for two constituencies—Dunwich in Suffolk, and Penryn in Cornwall. He elected to represent the latter borough, for which his father, Secretary James Vernon, had sat for fifteen years, from 1695 to 1710. Vernon, like all new members, had first to accustom himself to the atmosphere of Parliamentary life, and to acquire the necessary knowledge of the procedure of the House. It was not until later that he took a prominent part in Parliamentary debate.

The question of national finance was, at that time, causing much anxiety to His Majesty's "faithful Commons." Blunt's South Sea Bubble had already burst, but the effects of that mammoth fraud were by no means yet exhausted. Law's Mississippi Scheme—the great bubble of France—also had collapsed. That arch-promoter—promoters were styled projectors in the days of George I.—had favoured England with his presence, and notwithstanding his financial history on the Continent, he met with the treatment accorded to a person of great consideration. He came to England, indeed, from the Baltic, with the fleet in which Captain Vernon held a command in 1721. The King gave him a private audience, and the wealth which his pernicious schemes had brought him was allowed to cover the multitude of his misdeeds.

A question of immediate interest to Captain Vernon was the Navy Debt, which had now reached £1,700,000. It was beyond question that much of this money had

been spent without advantage to the nation. The obligations of various treaties and the payments of large subsidies had tended chiefly to the gain of certain foreign powers, whose chestnuts the King and his Ministers, at the expense of the taxpayers, had been too assiduous in pulling out of the fire. All these questions gave rise to heated debates, and in the midst of alarms Walpole dismayed the House with wild stories of an intended raid on the Bank and the Exchequer, and even of a dark plot against the person of the King.

It was a period when the nation bled at every pore. While Captain Vernon was a young member of the House the malpractices of the Lord Chancellor (the Earl of Macclesfield) were uncovered, and alarming rumours spread throughout the country as to the mysterious disappearance of suitors' funds in Chancery. The Chancellor was impeached at the bar of the Upper House. After a trial lasting twenty days the Keeper of the King's Conscience was found guilty of fraudulent practices. A fine of £30,000 was imposed, but after six weeks in the Tower of London his lordship found the money—whose?—and was discharged from custody. Had he been a clerk who had embezzled £20, instead of the highest dignitary of the law who had peculated to the extent of scores of thousands, he would doubtless have been transported to a penal settlement.

To Walpole, his Cabinet colleague, is attributed the



cynical saying that "all men have their price." Walpole's biographer, Coxe, affirmed that he merely meant that all "those men," indicating certain of his opponents, were purchasable. It matters little, as regards Lord Chancellor Macclesfield, which was the true version ; for he, undoubtedly, had his price, and took good care to get it.

It will be seen in the next chapter that Captain Vernon took part in the investigation of another and most scandalous form of corruption that was common enough at that period of our legal history.

King George, though not greatly beloved, generally managed to get what he wanted from the British Parliament, and when His Majesty had secured a vote nothing pleased him better than to get away from England and pay a visit to his beloved Hanover. In 1723 he actually absented himself for more than six months, but upon His Majesty's return he gave his faithful subjects to understand that he had all the time been very much concerned with their best interests. Again in 1725 the King visited his German dominions, where at Herrenhausen—that pinchbeck Versailles, beloved of the "Elephant" and the "Maypole"—the Treaty of Hanover was concluded between Great Britain, France, and Prussia.

It is a mild statement to say that this treaty was open to criticism from the British standpoint. But the House of Commons swallowed the bargain, though with rather a wry face, and voted the sum required

for the sea-service and incidental purposes, for the year 1726.

A month later His Majesty sent a message to the House stating that he found it necessary to augment his maritime force by increasing the number of seamen beyond the 10,000 already sanctioned. Again the House complied, the further vote being, in fact, directed against the intrigues then proceeding between Madrid and St. Petersburg. The Admiralty thereupon fitted out three squadrons—one for the Baltic, another for the West Indies, and a third for the Mediterranean. The first-mentioned squadron—under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Wager—included the *Grafton*, seventy guns, to which Captain Vernon was appointed. There were thirty-one sail of the line, and two fire-ships. By the time the fleet reached the Baltic the Russians had sixteen men-of-war at Cronstadt. To the admiral of the fleet Sir Charles Wager in due course handed a letter from King George to the Czarina protesting against the Russian armaments on sea and land, and against the alleged intrigues of the Russian Court with the Pretender. The royal missive, coupled with the presence of the royal ships, caused much resentment at St. Petersburg, but the Russian vessels were not in fighting form, and discretion proved the better part of valour. British officers, instead of being the targets for Russian guns, were feasted at Russian tables. All was peace and pleasantness—at any rate upon the surface.



The Spaniards, meantime, had planned the siege of Gibraltar—an attempt afterwards made and attended with almost ignominious failure.

The reign of George I. was now drawing towards its close. Once again visiting his German dominions, in 1727, His Majesty was seized with illness while travelling. According to Hume and Smollett, he forthwith lost the faculty of speech, but apparently he was well enough to cry to the driver of his coach to hasten to Osnaburg. He got to Osnaburg, and there he died, owing, it is prosaically said, to having eaten a very hearty supper, including part of a water-melon and sundry other fruits, besides drinking a large quantity of water. It was rumoured that the King had a presentiment that he would die soon after his wife departed this life. That unhappy woman had predeceased him at no great interval. The tragedy of her life was not played out as Queen Consort in England. It was in 1694 that it commenced, when Count Philip of Königs-marck, her lover, was about to carry off the Princess Sophia, wife of the then Electoral Prince of Hanover, afterwards George I. of England. A jealous woman foiled the plot. The Count was killed, his body burnt, and the Princess, then only twenty-eight years old, was hurried to the Castle of Ahlden, there to remain a prisoner for more than thirty years, and there to die. So, at the passing of the Elector-King, there was no widow to make lamentation, unless, indeed, we are to regard the Duchess of Kendal as a royal relict.

The story went that soon after the King's death a big raven appeared at the lady's residence at Twickenham. She associated the gloomy bird with the spirit of her departed lord and master, and was extremely solicitous in providing it with suitable food. The Duchess died a little later, but what happened to the mysterious raven is not authentically recorded.

## CHAPTER VI

Captain Vernon re-elected for Penryn—Serves before Gibraltar under Sir Charles Wager—Vote towards the debt for seamen's wages—Royal names for royal ships—Proposal for registration of seamen—Spanish attacks upon British shipping—Vernon and Sir Robert Walpole—Fleet assembled—A patched-up peace—Inquiry into naval finances refused by Ministers—England and Spain—A farcical subsidy—Convention of Prado—British captain mutilated by Spaniards—Excitement in England—Vernon's speeches in the House—Treaties and trade—Spain claims a British colony—Figures and fleets—Conference at the Admiralty—Parliamentary Reports in embryo—Vernon and the people—Walpole's sinister revenge—Vernon's advocacy of warlike measures—Appointed Vice-Admiral of the Blue—Received by the King—Squadron placed under his command—No marines on board—The Admiral's troops—A ministry of mean expedients—Squadron reaches Jamaica—The King and the nation—His Majesty's quarrel with the Prince of Wales.

IN the first Parliament of George II. Captain Vernon again took his seat as the re-elected member for Penryn, but only a few month's later, once more employed in active service, he joined Sir Charles Wager before Gibraltar. During the recent war the Spaniards had captured nearly seventy of our merchant vessels, and twelve had been taken by the French to Martinique,

under the hollow pretext that they were trading in contraband. At Gibraltar the Spaniards seemed resolved to make a show of keeping up the siege, although a cessation of hostilities had been proclaimed. The firm attitude of the British admiral, however, brought Spain to her senses, and the fleet returned to England after only a few months' service in the Mediterranean.

It was at this time that the House of Commons voted a sum of £500,000 towards meeting the debt of the Navy in respect of seamen's wages, and a new departure was made in the naming of some of the vessels of the Fleet, in order to associate His Majesty's ships with the names of members of the Royal Family. The *Humber*, 80 guns, became the *Princess Amelia*; the *Launceston* was rechristened the *Princess Louisa*, and so forth.

Captain Vernon obviously was well fitted to aid the councils of the nation in regard to many of the questions that came before Parliament early in the reign of George II. There was, amongst other questions, Walpole's excise scheme, which brought tumultuous crowds to Westminster, and led to its author being burnt in effigy by the populace. The Navy Debt which Sir William Wyndham analysed so remorselessly was another topic on which service members as experts were especially qualified to speak. Still more important was the urgent question of adequately manning the Fleet, which Sir Charles Wager, another distinguished service

member of the House, vainly endeavoured to make the subject of a Government Bill. It was proposed by such a measure to require registration of all seamen, watermen, fishermen, and lightermen throughout the kingdom, making them liable at any time to be summoned for service under the Flag. The Bill, which had a foundation of merit, was too sweeping in its provisions, and was resisted strenuously as a scandalous attempt to interfere with the liberties of the people. On the second reading it was rejected.<sup>1</sup>

It was in this Parliament that Captain Vernon took part in the investigation of gross abuses connected with the Fleet Prison. The Committee appointed by the House of Commons conducted its inquiry at the prison and reported :—

“‘That Thomas Bambridge, the acting warder of the prison of the Fleet, hath wilfully permitted several debtors of the Crown in great sums of money, as well as debtors to divers of His Majesty’s subjects, to escape ; hath been guilty of the most notorious breaches of his trust, great extortions, and the highest crimes and misdemeanours in the execution of his said office, and hath arbitrarily and unlawfully loaded with irons, put into dungeons, and destroyed prisoners for debt under his charge, treating them in the most barbarous and cruel manner in high violation and contempt of the laws of the Kingdom.’ In spite of this report and three subsequent trials for murder and other crimes, Bambridge seems to have escaped without any great punishment.

“The members of the Committee were as follows : Chairman,

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<sup>1</sup> The scheme seems to have been founded to some extent on Daniel Defoe’s project, noticed on p. 75.



MEETING OF A COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AT THE FLEET PRISON, 1729.

From a Painting by Hogarth in the National Portrait Gallery.

Admiral Vernon stands at the back of the group, the first figure on the reader's right.





General James Edw. Oglethorpe, Lord Morpeth, Lord Inchiquin, Lord Perceval, Sir Gregory Page, Sir Archibald Grant of Monymusk (for whom the picture was painted by William Hogarth), Sir James Thornhill, Sir Andrew Fountaine, General Wade, Capt. Vernon, R.N., Francis Child and Wm. Hucks, Esqrs." Bambridge stands on the extreme left in the accompanying plate.

This group is one of the most interesting examples of Hogarth's handiwork. The picture was presented to the National Portrait Gallery by the Earl of Carlisle only fourteen years ago.

In theory England and Spain were at peace, but there was much reason to believe that Spanish Governors and Guarda Costas in the West Indies were tacitly authorised to prey upon British commerce, thereby causing enormous losses to English merchants, and hindering the growing trade of our colonies in North America. Whenever the Navy was strongly represented in those seas British merchantmen were left alone. As soon as our warships were withdrawn the depredations were resumed. These vital questions gave rise to warm debates in the House of Commons. Captain Vernon could and did speak with exceptional authority on the subject under discussion. He knew the Spaniards well, and, knowing them, was fully aware that only strenuous measures on the part of Great Britain were likely to be effective. Sir Robert Walpole, whose influence with the House was enormous, was opposed to drastic steps; as a Minister of the Crown he was for peace at almost any price, and, doubtless, found the outspoken state-

ments of the member for Penryn extremely inconvenient. Nevertheless, Vernon's facts and arguments carried conviction to the minds of many of his hearers, and won him several powerful supporters in the House. It was resolved to present an address to the King, and in answer to the address His Majesty ordered thirty-three ships of war to be equipped immediately. The fleet, which assembled at Spithead, was joined by a squadron of fourteen Dutch warships, and the united fleets would have sailed for Jamaica had not a treaty of peace been promptly concluded by Spain. This treaty, however, was but a stop-gap arrangement, and after a very brief interval Spain was again giving trouble, not only in the West Indies, but in the Mediterranean also.

The expenses of the naval service were increasing year by year, but too often our ships were kept inactive, to the infinite disgust of Captain Vernon and those who shared his opinions. In 1735 Sir William Wyndham moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the accounts of the Navy, and in his speech exposed the fact that, without the authority of Parliament, £250,000 had been employed, not in building ships, but in erecting houses or offices for the accommodation of the Commissioners and officials of the Admiralty. Sir Robert Walpole made a show of yielding to inquiry, but in reality he sought time to marshal his forces, and with their aid he ultimately succeeded in crushing his opponents.

Diplomatic negotiations with the Court of Spain were now resorted to, and, as usual, failed to produce any practical result. At last a considerable fleet was sent to the Mediterranean, and Spain immediately altered her tone. If the Government of Great Britain had then and there stood to their guns, as the sailors of the King were prepared to do, it would have saved an infinity of trouble in the end; but Walpole and his faction, as on previous occasions, by their lack of vigour played into the hands of our enemies, and encouraged them to trifle with our national interests.

Sir Robert Walpole was a Minister who would always sooner purchase peace than fight for a victory. It was under his auspices that the country was saddled with some of the most preposterous subsidies ever paid to foreign courts. England, for example, was paying £230,923 for the yearly maintenance of 12,000 Hessian troops, while men of supposed light and leading actually were opposing the maintenance of a standing army at home. The King of Sweden drew from this country a subsidy of £53,000, and—grotesque climax!—the Grand Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttele, as an equivalent for £25,000 a year, solemnly guaranteed the integrity of the British dominions, and engaged to supply the King of England with 5,000 of his warriors if and when required. The practical result was that this important princelet made no increase in the normal number of his soldiers, so that, in effect, the British

taxpayer contributed to maintain the standing army of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttele.

Spain ultimately became bound, by the Convention of Prado, in January, 1739, to pay the South Sea Company £90,000, as compensation for damage to trade, subject to any ascertained set-off; but all sorts of pretexts were found for getting out of the liability. During the Parliamentary discussion to which these accounts gave rise convincing proof of the bad faith and barbarity of the Spaniards was forthcoming. One day there came to the House of Commons a certain Captain Jenkins, master of a Scottish merchantman, who had been brutally mutilated by the Spaniards. His nose had been split and his ears cut off by the commander of a Spanish Guarda Costa. His crew had been placed in irons, and the only pretext for the shameful barbarity was that the English ship was carrying contraband. It was a lie—not the first or the last lie of the kind that had been told by enemies of England. The members of the House, whatever their political quarrels among themselves, for the most part were Britons first and party-men afterwards. The wanton outrage of which their countryman was the victim stirred them to burning indignation. Jenkins actually produced one of the severed ears to the assembled members, and told how the Spanish captain had insolently bidden him carry it to the King of England, with the threat that His Majesty would be served in like manner if opportunity offered. A

modern journal, referring to the incident, makes light of this barbarous act, and regards the short speech made by Jenkins to the House as so much claptrap. There is no accounting for the point of view, but it is permissible to wonder what the writer would have felt and said if the Spanish captain had operated on him instead of on the ill-starred Jenkins,—on whose story certain chroniclers have vainly sought to throw discredit.

“Gentlemen,” said the unfortunate man, “after mangling me in this manner, they threatened to put me to death. I expected it, and recommended my soul to God, but the revenge of my cause to my country.” This may be “claptrap”; on the other hand it may be thought that a speech so brief, so pregnant, so pathetic, has rarely if ever been heard before or since in any popular assembly. At least it was convincing. Within and without the walls of Parliament the cry went up for vengeance. The epitome of what men thought and said lay in that one word—war! No member of the House in the debates that followed was more forcible in his utterances than was Captain Vernon; and, save with the Ministry, no one more popular. A man of deeds by choice and training, he now showed that he also understood the uses of language. His speeches, cheered at St. Stephen’s, were warmly applauded throughout the country, and his advocacy of strenuous measures against Spain was so widely endorsed that Ministers were constrained to listen to the mandate of the nation.



Vernon, from his place in Parliament, urged that Porto-Bello, the Spanish stronghold, could and should be captured. What was more to the point, and a practical proof of his sincerity, he made the bold announcement that if the Government would give him but six ships he himself would take it. Of course, it should be remembered that much and prolonged provocation had preceded the dastardly treatment of Captain Jenkins—the mutilation of this man and the insult to the King furnished, in effect, the last straw that broke the patience of Great Britain.

As far back as 1648 there was a treaty of navigation and commerce in the West Indies, entered into by England, Spain, and the States-General. By the fifth article of that treaty the contracting parties were “to retain and enjoy their possessions and commerce in America and other places, as they then respectively held the same.” By a supplementary treaty of 1667 it was expressly stipulated that no *Guarda Costa* or ship of war belonging to Spain should come within cannon-shot of an English ship if she met the latter at sea, but should send her long-boat or pinnace with two or three men to the English vessel, and that the master of the latter was to show his papers, to which papers entire faith and credit should be given on the question of contraband or no contraband. There was a further treaty in 1670, and under none of these conventions had the Spaniards any right to search and make prizes of our ships, but it was “always to be understood that

the freedom of navigation ought by no manner of means to be interrupted when there is nothing committed contrary to the true sense and meaning of these articles."

All those solemn compacts, vital in importance to this country and to her American colonies, Spain had honoured in the breach rather than in the observance. The King of Spain had even had the effrontery to claim the colony of Georgia as part of his territories, and questions also were raised as to the boundaries of Florida and Carolina. The brief mention of such facts is sufficient to explain how deeply the question between Great Britain and Spain concerned the King's subjects in America, and the warm appreciation that they subsequently showed of Vernon's signal services in the West Indies.

The settlement in Georgia, it may here be mentioned, was expressly sanctioned by Royal Charter, which constituted trustees for the management of the colony. The first body of emigrants, about one hundred in number, embarked at Gravesend in November, 1732, carrying with them tools, arms, ammunition, and provisions calculated to last for several months after they reached their destination.

The claim against the Spaniards for seizures of British ships and cargoes had amounted to £343,277, and this sum was obligingly written down to only £200,000. Spain claimed to cut down the damages still further, and an abatement of £45,000 reduced the

account to £155,000. But by the Treaty of Madrid in 1721, Great Britain was to restore to His Catholic Majesty all the ships of the Spanish Fleet that had been captured off Sicily, with their guns and equipment, "in the condition that they were then in, or else the value of those which had been sold, at the purchase price." Pursuant to this obligation, England tendered the prizes our Navy had made, but the Spanish commissaries, finding the ships greatly disabled, refused to accept them. Thereupon, by order of the Government of Minorca, the Spanish vessels were taken out of harbour and sunk. Spain then claimed £180,000 as the value of the ships. England would only admit the value at £60,000, and, after deducting that amount from the £155,000 already mentioned, there remained but the sum of £95,000 to come from Spain in satisfaction of all the losses caused to British and colonial shipping. But for the despatch of Admiral Haddock with a squadron to the coast of Spain, there would have been further quibbling over the figures. But the imminence of a bombardment made the Spaniards bestir themselves, and at Prado, one of His Catholic Majesty's palaces, the new convention—destined to be fiercely criticised—was hastily signed in January, 1739.

No sooner had the British squadron departed than the resources of Spanish diplomacy again were resorted to, and signs became manifest that Spain did not mean to keep faith even now. Such was the position of

affairs when the unlucky Jenkins came to England—in himself an indisputable object-lesson of Spanish perfidy and violence.

In consequence of the strong feeling throughout the country, voiced in the debates in which Captain Vernon had played so notable a part, Sir Robert Walpole summoned a conference at the Admiralty, and Vernon was one of the naval officers invited to attend. In truth, the Admiral had forced the hand of the First Minister of the Crown, and Walpole was not the man to forget or forgive the experience. Moreover, the whole episode must have brought home to him in a striking manner the growing power of the English Press. It is true that at the end of Queen Anne's reign he had defended that doughty journalist, Richard Steele, when his articles in *The Englishman* and *The Crisis* led to his expulsion from Parliament; but though Walpole on that occasion argued against arbitrary intervention by the Crown or Parliament, he expressly magnified the office and power of Ministers, and threw in a significant reference to the uses of the pillory. Moreover, the first of "the great commoners" always considered that a bribe was by far the best sort of gag for Pressmen.

But though it was still the age of bribery and corruption, the Press was growing in the grace of honesty, and even venturing to develop a system of Parliamentary reports. It was in 1736 that Cave began, tentatively, to give in *The Gentleman's Magazine*

information which the nation was entitled to receive. *The London Magazine* followed suit. Brief but corrected summaries of the principal speeches of members of Parliament now reached many of their constituents. In 1738 the Speaker (Onslow) drew attention to the subject, and contended that such reports reflected on the dignity of the House, and ought to be stopped. Walpole and Pulteney held the same opinion, and Sir Thomas Winnington was even more emphatic. "Why, sir," exclaimed that enlightened member, "you will have every word that is spoken here by gentlemen misrepresented by fellows who thrust themselves into our gallery. You will have the speeches of the House printed every day, and we shall be looked upon as the most contemptible assembly on the face of the earth." Poor Sir Thomas! if he breathed the air of Parliament to-day, how sadly disappointed he would be if the "fellows in the gallery" failed to report his interesting utterances. But in 1738 the House threatened pains and penalties. Cave, however, refused to be gagged. Whereas he had previously identified the speakers by the first and last letters of their names, he now adopted another disguise equally incapable of concealing identity. *The Gentleman's* commenced a sort of appendix to "Gulliver's Travels," and reported the debates in the senate of Great Lilliput, in which "Walelup," M.P., very obviously stood for Walpole. But for these reports the nation certainly would have been kept in the dark, instead of gaining the knowledge which led



to the popular support of Captain Vernon. He, of course, must have known full well that the steps he was adopting would not commend him to the favour of Ministers, or secure from the Admiralty due recognition of the ability and courage with which he served his country. The Government only turned to him now because it was unavoidable. And Sir Robert Walpole, with sinister revenge in relation to Porto-Bello, was disposed to take his political opponent at his word, in the full belief that he would find it impossible to achieve what he proposed.

“Vernon,” we read in Hume and Smollett’s “History,” “was extolled as another Drake or Raleigh ; he became the idol of a party, and his praise resounded from all corners of the kingdom. The Minister, in order to appease the clamours of the people on the subject, sent him as commander-in-chief to the West Indies ; he was pleased to remove such a troublesome censor from the House of Commons, and, perhaps, he was not without hope that Vernon would disgrace himself and his party by failing in the exploit he had undertaken.”

Meanwhile, however, all the arguments for and against the projected expedition were considered by the Admiralty at the conference already mentioned. Captain Vernon, as usual, expressed his views with perfect frankness. Granting that war with Spain would be hurtful to the nation in general, he was constrained nevertheless to point out that there might be a greater evil even than war :—

“I,” he continued, “have had the opportunity of knowing Old Spain since 1702, and New Spain since the year 1711 ; happy had



it been for the inhabitants of the former if they had never been acquainted with the territories of the latter . . . the Spaniards neglect improving their country at home and seek for riches in the new world. . . . Destroy their settlements in America, and Spain falls. . . . My opinion is that a strong squadron be (*sic*) sent to the West Indies, to distress the enemy in their very vitals, to destroy their mines, to seize upon their treasures, to take their ships, to ruin their settlements. Let them be attacked in as many places as possible at the same time, let us then extend our endeavours to the very antipodes of Madrid ; for I know the Spaniards trade there.”

His conclusion was, “If once Porto-Bello and Carthagena were taken, then all will be lost to them.”

This speech made the greatest possible impression upon his hearers. He spoke out of the fulness of his convictions, and already he had expressed his readiness to carry those convictions into action. Having now discharged his duty to his country, he quietly left London, probably with little expectation that Sir Robert Walpole and his colleagues even now would grasp the nettle.

The issue of the conference, however, was reported to the King and Privy Council, and it was decided to carry out, in part at any rate, the plan of campaign that Vernon had advised. Roused from his sleep at Chatham at two o'clock in the morning by a Government messenger, Vernon, on opening the official packet presented to him, found that it contained a commission appointing him Vice-Admiral of the Blue, and Commander-in-Chief of a squadron ordered to the West Indies. He was directed forthwith to attend at St. James's Palace, and immediately ordered a post-

chaise and set out for London. Eight hours later he presented himself at St. James's, and was received by the King.

Never did George II. affix his sign-manual to a more popular order than when His Majesty commissioned Admiral Vernon "to destroy the Spanish settlements in the West Indies, and to distress the shipping in every method whatever." Orders were issued to Portsmouth Dockyard for the equipment of nine ships, and in three days the Admiral had arranged his family affairs, and was ready to take command. His flag was hoisted on the *Burford*, 70 guns, 500 men. The other ships were the *Lennox*, *Elizabeth*, *Kent*, *Worcester*, *Stafford*, *Princess Louisa*, *Norwich*, and *Pearl*. These furnished the new Commander-in-Chief with a total command of 3,680 men, and 550 guns, all told.

The squadron weighed anchor on July 23rd, from Spithead, but in consequence of contrary winds had to bring to at Portland for about a week. This delay was utilised by Admiral Vernon in training the seamen at their guns and with small arms, and in otherwise fitting them as far as possible for the very arduous business that lay before them. Admiral Vernon's instructions to his captains were: "Upon coming up with any Spanish ships to use their utmost endeavours to take, sink, burn, or otherwise destroy them." The seamen of the fleet were to be assured that His Britannic Majesty would have regard to their services in the distribution of prizes taken from the Spaniards, and the captains were

further enjoined to daily exercise their men in the use of arms. This last injunction was of vital importance, for the Admiralty had actually sent the fleet to sea without providing it with a trained body of marines. A great many of the men shipped to fight for England had never handled even a musket in their lives, a scandalous fact to which, when the squadron reached Plymouth, Admiral Vernon referred very pointedly in a report to the Duke of Newcastle, as Secretary of State :—

“I could wish, indeed, he wrote, “we had each of us a company of foot, of regular troops . . . which would have strengthened us in numbers . . . and incited our new men to imitation of them. If we should come into a general war with France, as well as Spain, I believe your Grace will have clearly perceived, from the difficulty of manning the ships as they are, the necessity there may be for having most of our marching regiments converted into marines ; and if, as they become seamen, they were admitted to be discharged as such, that would make a good nursery for breeding them at a time we might probably find a necessity for them.”

The Admiral added a pregnant passage which stands as sound advice for all time, if England is to maintain her supremacy :—

“As I have always looked upon our fleet as what must not only protect our trade, but secure us the blessing of a Protestant successor, your Grace will be so good as to excuse the overflowing of a sincere though it may be imprudent zeal, being strongly convinced in my own judgment, that preserving a superiority at sea is the best security for His Majesty’s Government, as well as of the trade and prosperity of this kingdom.”

The foregoing letter was laid before the Privy

Council, yet nothing whatever seems to have been done by the Government to strengthen the Admiral's hands. This was the more discreditable inasmuch as a powerful Spanish squadron, spoken of as the Ferrol Fleet, for aught the Admiralty knew, might have attacked the British squadron at any moment. In those days navies had to wait on the will of the wind, and also they were dependent on their own discoveries, or chance information, for knowledge of the whereabouts of the enemy. Admiral Vernon, having reason to believe that the Ferrol squadron had sailed for Cadiz, had to detail certain of his ships for scouting purposes. His command thus necessarily weakened, he deemed it right again to impress his needs on the Admiralty, and asked for reinforcements sufficient to meet any hostile fleet that he might encounter. At the same time he declared his intention to risk censure for rashness rather than for want of zeal.

"Your Grace," he added in his further despatch to the Duke of Newcastle, sent from Madeira, "must bear a share of the censure if I am too weak for the work assigned me."

The methods of the Ministry at that period had been boldly challenged by Pulteney, Sir Robert Walpole's vehement opponent. Pulteney, speaking in the House of Commons, laid at the door of Sir Robert Walpole and his colleagues all the miseries endured by the King's subjects in the American plantations for want of the protection that the Home Government

professed, but failed to give them. Pulteney himself brought in a Bill on the subject, supporting it in a speech of much force and bitterness :—

“Mr. Speaker, sir,” he said, “from what was last spoken I can foresee the fate of the Bill I have now in hand. I can discern through all these thin disguises that some gentlemen have recourse to a mean expedient to hinder us from considering a Bill against which no show of reason or argument can be advanced. I hate, sir, all expedients, and I disdain all ministers who use them. Some ministers there are who live upon expedients, and who cannot do their dirty work without them. Expedients, sir, in the hands of weak ministers, are the instruments of defeating the most beneficial, and promoting the most destructive, measures. Some ministers know, sir, that the Bill for which I now stand up is a Bill that leaves no room for cobweb negotiations, inconsistent treaties, or mock expeditions for the future ; and that, sir, is the reason why this method is made use of to undermine it. The Bill, sir, for which I have laboured, will, I hope, recommend itself to every gentleman who has a just sense of his country’s honour, and if it is decreed that it must fall to the ground, I shall at least have the satisfaction of doing my duty honestly as a British subject and a member of the House. One good consequence I am persuaded will attend it. My countrymen will learn by the fate of it what they are to expect ; they will learn, sir, whether we are tamely to submit to insolence and oppression, or bravely to seize the means of redressing them.”

Vernon himself knew full well that he had to deal with a Ministry of mean expedients, a Ministry in the habit of covering its shortcomings by means of “cobweb negotiations,” and he was too blunt a sailor, too straightforward a man, to allow those in official authority over him to suppose that he was deceived by their devices. Hence, doubtless, the mean and



shabby treatment he received from the State he so faithfully served throughout his long and active career.

Having forwarded his remonstrances, however, the Admiral set about the practical business of the expedition. When the British squadron reached Port Royal there was still no news of the Ferrol Fleet, and the Admiral then concerted measures with the Governor of Jamaica who, in view of the importance of the intended operations, allowed 200 men to join the fleet and act as marines, instead of those who ought to have been shipped at Portsmouth. Thus His Excellency, who knew the needs of the American colonies, did what he could to make good the shortcomings of the Home Government, and that at a time when there were no more than 400 troops in garrison in the island. Furthermore, as a practical precaution, an embargo was laid upon all shipping for three days so that the enemy might not gain intelligence of the movements of the British squadron.

Before sailing from Port Royal for Porto-Bello, Admiral Vernon prepared another dispatch to the Admiralty, in which he writes :—

“I hope from the success of the expedition to convince our Royal Master (however I may have been misrepresented to him formerly) that no man in Britain has a sincerer inclination to serve His Majesty faithfully and resolutely.”

However much Admiral Vernon may have felt justified in criticising Ministers, his attitude towards the



King himself was always loyal and zealous. It is to be feared, however, that, prejudiced by those around him, King George must have regarded the gallant officer as somewhat too zealous. Moreover, a royal house that greatly preferred Hanover to England can hardly have been expected to manifest a keen interest in that potential Greater Britain which then was struggling for life in our American colonies. The King talked German and thought German, and he went back to Germany whenever he could manage it. In 1729 His Majesty retired to the delights of Herrenhausen for two whole years.

Even when he did remain in this country the second George did not show himself a monarch of imperial views or of cultivated tastes. Books he never read. Plays he did not understand. There is no record of his going to see Foote at the little house in the Haymarket, but assuredly the flippant comedies of that irrepressible joker would have been as entirely lost on His Majesty as were the tragic displays of Garrick at Drury Lane. When the King witnessed the great tragedian's rendering of "Richard III." he was badly bored. The only character that interested him was the gorgeous civic dignitary who entered when it was announced—"The Mayor of London comes to greet you." The King roused himself: "Duke of Grafton," he said, "I like dat Lord Mayor." And again when the scene was over: "Duke of Grafton, dat is a good Lord Mayor." Finally, when Richard on Bosworth



KING GEORGE II.

From a Painting by Thomas Worlidge in the National Portrait Gallery.

[To face p. 130.]



Field was tearing a passion in tatters and shouting for a horse, His Majesty inquired : " Duke of Grafton, will dat Lord Mayor not come again ? "

His Gracious Majesty did not even understand our idioms, and when a British admiral suggested that the enemy had " taken a deal of drubbing," the poor King was quite at a loss to know what was intended. Though George personally was brave, there is reason to believe that the grim game of war did not greatly interest him. He preferred a game of cards or backgammon. Besides, notoriously, family feuds are all absorbing, and George II., at about the time of Admiral Vernon's expedition, had a very pretty quarrel on hand with the Prince of Wales. The King kept up the quarrel, and the heir-apparent was turned out of St. James's Palace. He was not even allowed to see his mother on her death-bed—that last dread scene reduced to a ghastly farce by the royal husband who, when the dying woman bade him marry again, exclaimed : " Non, non ; j'aurai des mattresses."

## CHAPTER VII

Strength of Porto-Bello—Arrival of British Fleet—Attack opened—Town captured—Terms of capitulation—Vernon removes guns and destroys fortifications—Address in Parliament—Rejoicings in England—Lord Chesterfield's tribute to Vernon—Walpole's position—Debates in Parliament—Defeat of the Ministry—Was Walpole a traitor?—Vernon's success the cause of the statesman's fall—Auxiliary fleet sails to join the Admiral—Death of the Military Commander—Dangers from hostile fleets.

ADMIRAL VERNON's available squadron now consisted of six ships only, carrying but 200 West Indian soldiers and 2,495 seamen. This being his fighting force, the Admiral, when at sea, delivered his orders to the commodore and captains, with carefully considered dispositions for the attack. On reaching Porto-Bello it was specially enjoined on the several captains :—

“That from the men's inexperience in service, it was necessary to take precaution to prevent hurry and confusion, and a fruitless waste of their powder and shot ; . . . they were to strictly prohibit all their men from holloaing, and making such-like irregular noise, that would only serve to throw themselves into confusion, till such time as the service was fully performed, and they had nothing left to do but to glory in their victory, which such confusion might often prevent.”

The Admiral also appointed the general rendezvous, in case of a separation, to be in or off Porto-Bello harbour ; and it having been found that the hailing of ships, on a hostile coast at night, had often proved disastrous to the service, he prudently altered that method of information, and ordered the use of proper signals.

The town of Porto-Bello, lying on the north side of the Isthmus of Darien, was about eighteen leagues from Panama. The bay was deep and wide, affording excellent anchorage and shelter. On the north a fort, known as the Iron Castle, had been constructed on a steep rock, and here were mounted 78 heavy guns, with a battery below of 22 guns. The castle was believed to be garrisoned by 300 men. On the opposite side of the bay was Gloria Castle, consisting of two regular bastions to the sea, mounting 98 guns, with a curtain between them mounting 22 guns, and garrisoned by 400 men. On higher ground, near the other end of the town on a point that ran into the bay, stood Fort St. Jeronimo, a quadrangular redoubt strongly built and well planted with cannon. It was thus apparent that a hostile entrance to the harbour would be extremely difficult and dangerous.

The Spaniards, indeed, regarded the place as impregnable. The town itself lay at the end of the harbour, bending along the shore like a crescent moon. There were about five hundred houses, two churches, a treasury, custom-house, and an exchange. On the



east side the ground was low and swampy. The climate and lack of sanitation rendered the place unhealthy in the extreme. The town, however, had become the mart for European manufactures, and for the rich products of Peru.

Delayed by contrary winds, it was the evening of the 20th of November before the British squadron hove in sight of Porto-Bello, and there being then but little wind, the Admiral (lest he should be driven to the east of the harbour) made the signal for coming to anchor at six leagues off the shore. On the following morning a line of battle was formed, but the wind being easterly, attack had to be confined to the Iron Fort only, close to which the squadron was piloted by Captain Renton.

Commodore Brown led the attack, and fired some four hundred shot in about twenty-five minutes ; being well supported by Captain Herbert in the *Norwich*, and Captain Mayne in the *Worcester*. The Spaniards promptly fled from several parts of the fort ; upon which Admiral Vernon made a signal for the boats, in which were about forty sailors, a company of marines and their officers, to make the best landing possible. He himself drew closer to the fort in order to batter it effectually. The Flag-ship was welcomed with a volley, of which one shot struck away the stern of the Admiral's barge ; another broke a large gun on the upper deck ; a third went through the fore top-mast ; and a fourth, passing through the awnings within two inches of the main-mast, very near the

Admiral himself, killed three men, and wounded five others.

Probably the Spaniards imagined they could sink the whole squadron, but after the first volley the British ships returned the compliment in such a manner that, though the shore batteries fired a few shot, they did no material damage. Meanwhile the fire of the Admiral's small-arms commanded the Spaniards' lower batteries, and had a good effect in driving them from their position. This facilitated the task of the landing party. Of the soldiers in the boats only two were killed. The rest of the little force landed safely. One sailor placed himself close under an embrasure, whilst another climbed upon his shoulders, and entered the fort under the mouth of a big gun. This threw the Spaniards into general consternation, and the officers and men in the lower battery fled to the upper part of the fort and hoisted a white flag.

Our seamen, meantime, had climbed the walls of the lower battery, and struck the Spanish colours ; the soldiers followed, and those Spaniards, who had retreated to the upper part of the fort, soon surrendered at discretion. They numbered only five officers and thirty-five men out of about three hundred, the rest being either killed or wounded, or having made their escape.

From Gloria Castle the enemy kept up an ineffectual fire at the Flag-ship until night. Admiral Vernon vigorously replied, none of his shot falling short ; and

one of them going through the Governor's house, some through other houses in the town, while one shot sunk a sloop under the wall of the castle.

The next morning the Governor's adjutant came off in a boat with proposals for capitulation, offering—

“To deliver up all the fortifications, provided the Spaniards might be allowed to march out with the honours of war, receive an indemnity for themselves, the town and the inhabitants, and be permitted to retain all the ships in the harbour.”

This last stipulation Admiral Vernon would not entertain for one moment, the more so as these were the very ships that had done the English merchants and the colonists most of the injuries complained of on these coasts. Accordingly, the British Admiral immediately drew up the terms, and the only terms which he would admit, allowing the Spaniards but a few hours for their decision. Within the time limited the terms were accepted. It would be superfluous to set out in detail all the articles of the capitulation. The most important were as follows :—

5th. “That the ships with their apparel and arms should be absolutely delivered up to the use of His Britannic Majesty ; but that all the officers, both soldiers and crew, should have three days allowed them to retire with their personal effects ; only one officer being admitted on board each ship and vessel, to take possession for His Britannic Majesty, and see the articles strictly complied with.

6th. “That, provided the articles were strictly complied with, and that possession was given of the Castle of St. Jeronimo, in the same manner as stipulated for the Castle Gloria, then the clergy, the churches, and the town, should be protected and preserved in all their immunities and properties.”

Before night Admiral Vernon sent Captain Newton, who commanded the detachment of soldiers from Jamaica, with about 120 of his men to take possession of Gloria Castle and St. Jeronimo Fort. There were in the harbour two Spanish men-of-war of 20 guns each, and those were surrendered.

The Admiral took on board his ships from the several fortresses—40 pieces of brass cannon, 10 brass field-pieces, 4 brass mortars ; and rendered unserviceable above 80 iron cannon, by knocking off their trunnions, and spiking them ; he also took on board all the enemy's shot and ammunition, except 122 barrels of powder, which were expended in springing mines. By this means all the fortifications of the town were blown up and entirely demolished, the harbour being left open and defenceless. Ten thousand dollars, designed for paying the Spanish troops, were requisitioned by the Admiral, and distributed among the ships' crews and the troops.

Vernon now sent a letter to the President of Panama, demanding the release of the factors and servants of the South Sea Company, who had been made prisoners by the Spaniards, and this requirement was promptly complied with.

On March 18, 1740, the following address was presented to His Majesty by both Houses of Parliament :—

“ MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,—We, your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords spiritual and temporal, and Commons

in Parliament assembled, do congratulate your Majesty on the glorious success of your Majesty's arms in the West Indies, under the command of Admiral Vernon, by entering the Port and taking the town of Porto-Bello, and demolishing and levelling all the Forts and Castles belonging thereto, with *six ships of war only*.

"This enterprise, so wisely concerted and so bravely conducted, cannot fail of giving the utmost joy to all your Majesty's faithful subjects, since it affords the most reasonable hopes and expectation, that, by the blessing of God upon your Majesty's councils and arms, it may be attended with other important advantages, and highly contribute to the obtaining real and effectual security of those just rights of navigation and commerce belonging to your Majesty's subjects, for the preservation of which your Majesty entered into this necessary war."

To which His Majesty replied :—

"MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,—I thank you for your dutiful congratulations on this success, which is so much for the honour and interest of my crown and kingdoms. The satisfaction you express in the measures I have taken is very agreeable to me."

On the same date, March 18, 1740, the thanks of both Houses of Parliament were voted to the Admiral.

In his dispatch to the Home Government Admiral Vernon, far from "resting on his oars," declared his intention to prepare next for an expedition against Carthagena, though he had reason to believe that the Spanish warships there were equal in number to his own ; with 150 guns in the fortifications, and a garrison of 800 regular troops, besides a numerous militia. In his letter to the Duke of Newcastle the Admiral plainly stated, however, that he was then making the last effort that the existing circumstances would permit. "For

unless His Majesty's orders furnish the means and ships" his measures would prove entirely fruitless. He further intimated that without a full and speedy supply of stores his squadron would inevitably be laid up and rendered inactive.

Commenting on a bellicose communication he had received from the Spanish Governor, he declared :—

"The best answer will be from the mouth of our mortars, which may instruct him where to find me if he continues in his heroic disposition."

Writing about the same time to Sir Charles Wager, then at the Admiralty, Vernon expressed himself eager to inflict further defeat upon the Spaniards by way of "amply retaliating all the unjust injuries and depredations they had so long been practising against us," and went on, incidentally, to urge improvements in the construction of ships built for the Navy, besides various practical measures for the betterment of British seamen.

Thus had the great Spanish stronghold, with all the mischief and menace that sprang from it, collapsed like a house of cards, under the vigorous attack of a resolute British Admiral. There is no occasion to magnify Admiral Vernon's achievement; and, on the other hand, there is no justification for belittling it. His measures were well concerted and courageously carried out. The probability is that Vernon's reputation as a commander possessed of courage and resource had sapped



in advance the spirit of the Spaniards. They certainly made a contemptible show of resistance to the attack of our badly equipped squadron. But no one could foresee or expect the comparative ease with which the victory was secured. With a stronger force Admiral Vernon could have pushed into the interior, inflicting further punishment on Spain ; but, even as it was, the commercial results of the capture of Porto-Bello were of enormous importance to British and colonial commerce, then so largely centred in the West Indies. If the British Government had fulfilled their part and properly strengthened the Admiral's hands, he could and would have held Porto-Bello, instead of contenting himself with destroying the defences. He might have made himself master of Panama. In that way there would have been secured for Great Britain the whole trade with the coast of Chili and Peru, and with the western coast of Mexico, thus crippling the power of Spain beyond all possibility of recovery.

But, in truth, history was repeating itself. Had the Government acted with firmness and consistency some years earlier, not merely a heavy loss in trade, but great loss of British seamen's lives, would have been averted. In 1726 Admiral Hosier, with a strong fleet, was sent to the West Indies, and undoubtedly even then he could have reduced Porto-Bello and humbled the power of Spain ; but his orders debarred him from taking aggressive measures against the enemy. The fleet remained inactive, mocked by the Spaniards, while

disease spread with dire effect among the crews. Thus, as on other occasions before and later, the man of action abroad was fettered and fooled by men of words at home. Thirteen captains, more than forty lieutenants, and 4,000 seamen were lost, chiefly by disease, in that ill-starred expedition, and Admiral Hosier himself died—it was said of a broken heart—in 1727. It may be that he died of fever as did the 4,000 seamen who went out, as they supposed, to fight the Spaniards, but in reality to be killed by the climate or by avoidable disease. But assuredly the treatment accorded to Hosier by the Walpole Ministry was calculated to break the spirit of any commander, however brave or patient. After his death a city merchant named Glover wrote a ballad called “Admiral Hosier’s Ghost,” which had an immense sale in London. A correspondent of Horace Walpole sent him a copy with the quaint comment that “the patriots cry it up, and the courtiers cry it down, and the hawkers cry it up and down.”

The victory which Vernon this time had achieved so swiftly and at such small sacrifice of human life, was hailed with enthusiasm in England.

In the same month of March, 1740, when the thanks of both Houses were voted to the Admiral, the Court of Common Council resolved to present him with the Freedom of the City in a gold box.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Wright, in his biography of Wolfe, says: “Great was the joy of England when, in March, 1740, the news arrived of Vernon’s victory at Porto Bello. Hero-worship has seldom enthralled more

But while his fellow-countrymen in and out of Parliament, and our colonists in America, did honour to whom honour was due, the Government clique in reality was much enraged at Vernon's success. The sinister expectations of Ministers had been disappointed, and not a gun was fired in honour of the Admiral's achievement. Attempts were made, indeed, to disparage it, and even to suggest that Vernon had disregarded orders.

Lord Chesterfield, referring to the Ministerial attitude in a subsequent debate in the House of Lords, exposed the meanness of Sir Robert Walpole and his colleagues in scathing terms. Admiral Vernon, he pointed out, with six ships and about 2,000 sailors, and "200 tattered soldiers from Jamaica," had done what the Government declared could not be done except by a large squadron and at least 8,000 men.

"When war was resolved on," said his lordship, "Admiral Vernon was called on from ploughing the ground to ploughing the main. . . . In peace time he was never employed. He was even disappointed in his preferment. The reason was plain ; he was not fitted for those services which entitle our land and sea captains to preferment in time of peace, for he was generally in the Opposition in the House or Commons."

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abject votaries than those who bowed down before the idol of the hour. Innumerable were the medals struck to perpetuate 'the British glory revived in Admiral Vernon.' Specimens of these medals still are found from time to time. Of one that was dug up in a garden in 1862, the editor of *Notes and Queries* said that the workmanship was abominable, "but such was the demand that upwards of one hundred varieties of it are in the British Museum."

These observations faithfully represented the popular view of the situation. Medals were struck in the Admiral's honour. Poets and prose-writers did him justice, or, as his enemies thought, more than justice, with their pens; and to all the world one thing was manifest: Vernon had kept his word!

When the Admiral's birthday came round, in November, public banquets were held. London was illuminated, the church bells pealed, and the Spanish Governor of Porto-Bello was burnt in effigy in many places. At the end of Chancery Lane a species of pageant was displayed, showing a Spaniard on his knees offering his sword to the British Admiral—whose family motto, *Ver-non semper viret*, was given as *Vernon semper viret* for the occasion. The motto in its correct reading is a curious example of the punning propensity of the ancestors of certain ancient families. The Vernons had adopted *Ver-non semper viret* just as the Fortescues had their *Forte scutum salus ducum*; the Nevills their *Ne vile velis*, and the Dixies their *Quod dixi, dixi*—which last reminds us of a much-quoted utterance of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain when he was Colonial Secretary.

For Sir Robert Walpole the whirligig of time was bringing in its revenges. He found himself in an utterly illogical position, but he stuck to it with a bulldog tenacity worthy of a better cause. He had denounced the war with Spain, but he retained office when Parliament and the nation rejected his advice. He was

against war, but clung to the office from which warlike operations must needs be directed. No wonder that turmoil reigned in Parliament, and that the Cabinet itself was torn with dissensions. A war conducted in such circumstances courted disaster, and exposed the services to cruel mortification.

In December, 1740, Lord Bathurst, in the House of Lords, moved for production of the orders and instructions sent to Admiral Vernon. But the supporters of the Government were in the majority. His lordship, nothing daunted, brought forward another motion for securing the production of all letters sent to and received from the Admiral. This was successful. Such light as the revealed correspondence presently threw on the conduct of the war only served to confirm the conviction that Ministers had not shown sincerity and earnestness in supporting our Navy. Admiral Vernon, waiting in the West Indies in order to carry out in the hour of danger the active programme which the Government professed to desire, had been kept waiting for the necessary ships and fresh stores. The auxiliary fleet under Sir Chaloner Ogle, to which further reference will be made presently, was not promptly assembled. At first only six vessels were commissioned for the convoy. Then came news that the Spaniards had sent their Ferrol squadron of twelve men-of-war to the West Indies, and that the Brest and Toulon squadrons were likely to join it—these being some of the “extraordinary proceedings” indicating the inclination of

France to make common cause with Spain. A larger convoy now was organised, but still there was delay upon delay, causing intense disquietude to Admiral Vernon, who knew from experience the difficulty of getting a large fleet of transports out of the Channel when equinoctial gales might be expected. It was now autumn, and to ensure the aid of easterly winds the fleet ought to have sailed in the spring !

The state of things in the West Indies was from time to time made known by Admiral Vernon's further letters to his friends. The feeling thus quickened led to the famous Opposition attack of February, 1741, when an address was moved praying the King to dismiss Sir Robert Walpole, K.G., First Commissioner, Chancellor and Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer, from His Majesty's presence and counsels for ever. The debate in the Commons was one of the most exciting and memorable ever heard within the walls of Parliament. Early in the dark wintry morning members hurried to St. Stephen's, though the business of the day was not to commence until one o'clock. Long before that hour every seat was occupied, and the very approaches of the House were thronged. Of course there were many counts in the indictment, unfolded in both chambers simultaneously, but the climax lay in Walpole's alleged misconduct in relation to the war, and that, in turn, practically meant his failure to give proper support to Admiral Vernon. In the Commons Pulteney and Pitt



were prominent in attack, and Walpole himself was marvellously vigorous in self-defence. Mr. Morley, in his sympathetic biography of the "great Minister," interprets the condensed report of his speech as indicating that his argument was marked by animation, comprehensiveness, and dignity. Walpole, undoubtedly, showed his knowledge of tactics that tell when he strove to carry the war into the enemy's camp. He jeered at the patriotism of his critics :—

"A patriot, sir ! why, patriots spring up like mushrooms. I could raise fifty of them within the four and twenty hours. I have raised many of them in one night. It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or insolent demand, and up starts a patriot !"

But the oratorical sword had a double edge when used by a Minister who was known to hold that every patriot had his price. For the moment, however, the old Parliamentary hand triumphed. The motion for his dismissal was thrown out by 290 against 106 in the Commons, and by 108 against 59 in the Upper House. Many members, however, torn by conflicting influences, had abstained from voting, or disappeared in the course of the debate. But Walpole's victory was of the sort that presages ultimate defeat. He himself must have been sensible of what was coming, and one who was behind the scenes—Horace Walpole—has torn the veil aside :—

"He" (Sir Robert) "who was asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow . . . now never sleeps above an hour without waking ; and he who, at dinner, always forgot he was minister, and was more

gay and thoughtless than all his company, now sits without speaking, and with his eyes fixed for an hour together."

A tragic and pathetic glimpse—significant foreshadowing of the end!

For a time Ministers seem to have supposed that their masterful leader would weather all storms. Walpole, indeed, recovered his spirits after an interval, and braced himself for further conflict.

In January, 1742, Pulteney again marshalled his forces, and moved for the appointment of a committee to examine persons and papers capable of affording evidence as to the conduct of the war with Spain. A remorseless whip went out from the Government. The sick and the lame were hurried down to their seats, and the Opposition showed equal energy. Horace Walpole came away from the exhausting debate more dead than alive, and that seems to have been the case with many of the honourable members, including the invalid Sir William Gordon, "with a blister on his head, and flannel hanging out from under his wig"; and the old Admiral Sir Charles Wager, "who looked like Lazarus at his resuscitation."

When the division took place at eleven at night, the proposed commission was rejected, but the Government majority was reduced to three. Two hundred and fifty members had voted for the motion. "The greatest number that ever *lost* a question," said Horace Walpole, in one of his letters to his friend Sir Horace Mann.

Sir Robert Walpole must have known better now than ever that, politically speaking, he was absolutely doomed. The fight was resumed, however, over certain election petitions, and Walpole still stood his ground until the last inch of it was cut from under him. When that time came, as presently it did, he sought an interview with the King, who, it is said, embraced him and wept upon his neck. The Sovereign believed in his Minister; can we be sure that the Minister was faithful to his King? It was not till after Walpole's death that there was found among his papers a letter from the head of the house of Stuart addressed to one Carte, a Jacobite historian. It appeared to be written in reply to some message conveying assurances of support sent indirectly by a personage of great influence in England. Who was that influential personage, and how came the reply letter into Walpole's possession, and why did it bear an endorsement in Walpole's writing vouching it as an original document? Coxe, the statesman's biographer, knew of this letter, but actually suppressed all reference to it in his book. Mr. Morley, more candid and courageous, discusses the letter, but, by a process of special pleading somewhat difficult to follow, declares it incredible that Walpole himself was a traitor to the House of Hanover. Nevertheless if the English leader was really in league with the Pretender, it certainly would go far to explain his conduct in reference to the war with Spain.

His resignation accepted on the 2nd of February, 1742, Sir Robert Walpole turned his back for ever on the great assembly in which he had been the dominant figure for so many years. He accepted the title of Earl of Orford, and for some time remained a power behind his party. It stands to his indisputable credit that he met disaster with a courageous front, just as a few years later he bore unflinchingly the tortures of the cruel disease with which the surgery of that period knew not how to grapple as it knows to-day.

Walpole died in 1745. There are good grounds for believing that he always attributed his political downfall to Vernon's successes and popularity.

All this time the Admiral himself was still on foreign service. He, at any rate, was not among the members of the House who witnessed the dethronement of the powerful Minister who had treated him with such injustice and resentment.

On the 5th of September, 1740, Vernon was joined at Jamaica by a squadron of store-ships, under convoy of the *Tilbury* and the *Defiance*, and he then promptly sailed on a cruise off the coast of Cuba. In the following month he was joined by eight sail of transports convoyed by H.M.S. *Wolf*, bringing land forces from North America.

The auxiliary fleet, under Sir Chaloner Ogle, that ultimately assembled at Spithead for service in the West Indies, included twenty-one sail of the line, besides frigates and fire-ships, with 12,000 sailors and

six regiments of foot and marines, under the command of Lord Cathcart. Walpole's critics had wondered if this was to be a mere Spithead expedition, and he, driven into a corner at last, and knowing of what he was suspected, exclaimed :—

“I oppose nothing. I give in to everything, am said to do everything, am to answer for everything, and yet God knows I dare not do what I think right. I am of opinion for leaving (*sic*) more ships of Sir Chaloner Ogle's squadron behind, but I dare not, and I will not make any alteration.”

At last, on the 17th of December, 1740, Ogle's squadron hove in sight at Dominica, but a serious loss befell the expedition in the death of Lord Cathcart, commander of the land forces, an able officer, who had sailed with the intention of cordially co-operating in the measures Admiral Vernon might deem expedient. The command of the troops fell to Lieut.-General Wentworth, whose unfitness for the position was to be made only too clear.

The fleet now consisting of about thirty sail of the line, a third division was formed and placed under the command of Commodore Lestock—a wise measure, as it was necessary to watch, not only the Spaniards, but the ships of France. There was good reason to believe that the latter had secret orders to make common cause with Spain, notwithstanding the obligation of neutrality. But for the arrival of Sir Chaloner Ogle it was probable that the two hostile fleets might have attacked Jamaica.

It so happened, however, that the French Admiral found his ships insufficiently and badly provisioned. A hasty return to Europe became compulsory. As it was, he lost about 3,000 men, and the survivors were reduced each to "three ounces of bread a-day, and that half worms and dirt."

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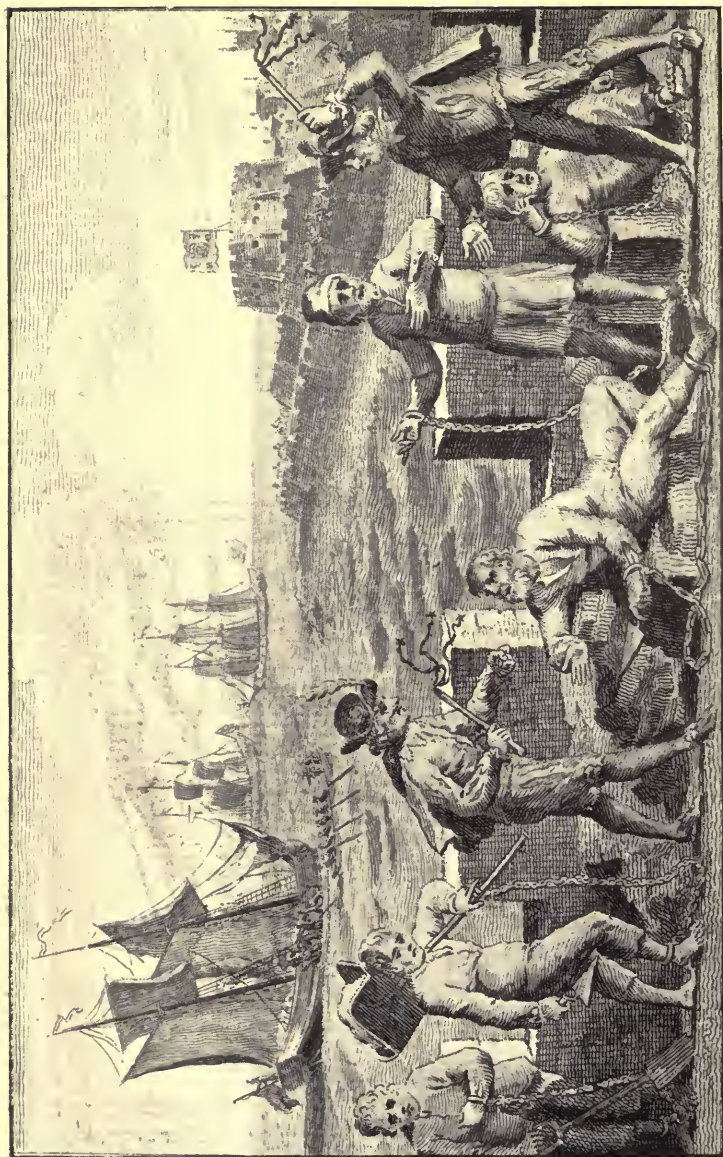


## CHAPTER VIII

Admiral Vernon bombards Carthagena—Forts silenced and troops landed—Spanish flag-ship captured—Failure of General Wentworth's operations—Sickness among the troops—Story of the siege in "Roderick Random"—What the fleet accomplished—Hospital ships of the period—Sufferings of the men—Lines by Thomson in "The Seasons"—Lawrence Washington serves under Vernon—George Washington contemplates entering the Royal Navy—His estate named "Mount Vernon" in honour of the Admiral—[Tree planted there by Archbishop of Canterbury in 1904]—Return of the fleet to Jamaica—Plan for attacking Cuba—Troops landed to surprise Santiago—Wentworth fails—Vernon's captures—Return to England—Reception at Bristol—Receives the Freedom of the City of London—Takes his seat in House of Commons as member for Ipswich.

THE city of Carthagena, to which Admiral Vernon now directed his attention, was a place of great importance to the Spaniards. Lying to the east of the Gulf of Darien, south of Jamaica, and a hundred and ten leagues north-east of Panama, the port (which had its beginnings in 1532), had become the centre of a great trade, and a convenient rendezvous for the fleets of Spain. Drake, with a small but daring force, sacked the place in 1585, and some years later five privateers, under a Spanish malcontent, surprised the town, burnt





BRITISH PRISONERS AT CARTHAGENA.

From an old Magazine.

many of the houses, and laid hands upon an enormous store of treasure. The city was rebuilt, and its prosperity, in course of time, revived. The French took it in 1697, and secured a vast quantity of booty. Once again, however, Carthagena raised its head, and when Admiral Vernon counselled the Government of Great Britain to compass its destruction, it was the best fortified and most populous city in America.

There was a garrison of about 4,000 men, besides a number of Indians and negroes. The walls of the city were washed by the sea, but the heavy surf in itself constituted a strong defence, and the only practicable approach was by means of a lake which, in effect, constituted the harbour. The channel of approach was about a league to the west of the city. The passage called Boca Chica (or the Little Mouth) ran between two narrow peninsulas, on one of which was the Castle of St. Louis, its four bastions strongly built and mounting eighty-two guns and three mortars, flanked by various redoubts, containing some twenty-six additional guns. On the other side of the inlet was a fascine battery of fifteen guns, and in a small bay at the back another battery of four guns, while, facing the entrance of the harbour, on a low-lying island stood Fort St. Joseph, with twenty-one guns. Between this fort and the castle a boom and cables were fixed by means of three large anchors at each end. Without specifying numerous fortifications more immediately protecting the town itself, it will be apparent from the above

particulars that Carthagena, if not impregnable, was, at least, a stronghold of formidable character.

Such was the place before which the British Fleet appeared on the evening of the 5th of March, 1741. The anchorage chosen was in Alaza Grande, to windward of the town. It had already been decided in a council of war vigorously to attack Carthagena both by land and sea, and in pursuance of that resolution Sir Chaloner Ogle received orders from Admiral Vernon, who held the command-in-chief, to open fire on certain specified forts to cover a landing by the troops at the spot where the French had landed in 1697.

Ogle opened the attack on the 9th of March. The Spanish gunners in one of the smaller forts speedily deserted their position, and the guns of the forts of St. Jago and St. Philip were soon silenced by those of the *Norfolk*, *Russell*, and *Shrewsbury*. Then a detachment of grenadiers was landed and took possession of the vacated forts. On the 10th of March the two regiments of Harrison and Wentworth and six regiments of marines also landed without opposition. Their tents and tools were put ashore on the following day, and an encampment formed ; the artillery and ordnance stores following a few days later.

Day after day the attack was pushed and driven home by the British ships, the Spaniards showing the feeblest possible spirit. They abandoned fort after fort, and



presently set fire to one of their own ships in the harbour. Under Admiral Vernon's directions the boom was cut, and the Spanish flag-ship, *Galicia*, boarded, the captain and some sixty marines being made prisoners. The Spaniards now sunk some of their own ships, thus obstructing the channel. Great exertions were made by Vernon to get the masts out of the sunken ships, in order to secure a channel for our own through the deepest water, and it was resolved presently, in another council of war, to cut off the town on the land side. Thus far, success had attended our arms beyond anything that could have been anticipated, and Captain Laws of the *Spence* was sent to England with the Admiral's first report and the captured flag of the Spanish Admiral, which was some 40 feet in length.

In London the news of Vernon's further success was received with much enthusiasm. Guns were fired from the Tower and from the shipping in the Thames. Once again the bells were set ringing, and bonfires and illuminations marked the event, both in the capital and in the provinces. Captain Laws had reached England on the 17th of May, 1741 ; but meanwhile the initial success achieved, thanks mainly to the naval service, was not being followed up by the land forces as it should have been. From the first day of their landing, bad judgment on the part of the Brigadier was apparent. The men for three days were kept inactive in their encampment,



pitched as it was on white, burning sand, in the full heat of a blistering sun. There were woods at hand, and here space could have been cleared for the camp, which would have been sheltered, not only from the intolerable sun, but also from the guns of the Spaniards. The engineers, however, were lethargic, and sickness almost immediately attacked the troops. The Admiral remonstrated with the Brigadier, and the Brigadier found fault with his officers. Promptitude in cutting off the land approaches of the town was of vital importance ; but, instead of promptitude, there was delay. The enemy's spirit revived, and when, after much procrastination, Wentworth attacked the castle and trenches of St. Lazar, which ought to have been a surprise, the Spaniards were ready, the attack was ill-directed, and the British were beaten back with a loss of about 600 officers and men, killed and wounded.

After this the land forces made no headway at all, and already some 500 men had sickened or died.

The water supply ran short, and the position became in every way so grave that the only thing to be done was to re-embark the men without further delay. This was done under the protection of the guns of the fleet ; but alas ! of the 5,000 men who had landed only 3,200 returned to their ships. If the Spaniards had understood their business, nothing like that number would have left the shores of Carthage. Of the number re-embarked, very many were quite

unfit for further service. Even under these discouraging conditions, Vernon did not relax his grip. He used the *Galicia*, the Spanish Admiral's ship, to bombard the walls of the town. The shoals of the harbour prevented the nearer approach of any of the British warships, but, in any case, Admiral Vernon would not have risked them for such a purpose, his view being that—

“No ships should ever be brought to batter against stone walls unless the commanders are at first assured they can place their ships within musket-shot of them.”

Smollett, in “Roderick Random,” introduces an account of the attack on Carthage, in which he puts into his hero's mouth some caustic criticism of the operations. Admiral Vernon and Brigadier Wentworth, though not expressly named in the story, are unmistakably indicated, and each of them comes in for a considerable amount of acrimonious censure. The Admiral's use of the *Galicia* for the above purpose is the subject of especial comment. After describing how the *Galicia* was turned into the inner harbour in the night, and moored within half a mile of the walls, against which she began to fire at day-break, the author adds by way of criticism that this was continued for about six hours, the ship being exposed to at least thirty pieces of cannon, which at length obliged our men to set her on fire and get off as well as they could in their boats :—

“This piece of conduct afforded matter of speculation to all the wits either in the Army or Navy, who were at last fain to acknowledge that it was a stroke of policy above their comprehension.”

Admiral Vernon was simply trying an experiment, and only using for that experiment one of the ships of the Spaniards themselves. He may have been right or he may have been wrong. In war, when results are unfavourable commanders never escape criticism, whether it be deserved or not. Smollett sneers at the ease with which Vernon disposed of his captious critics and justified his conduct “to a Ministry at once so upright and discerning,” and ignores the actual results achieved by the fleet. Yet the results were as follows : Spanish ships, taken or sunk—The *Galicia* (flag-ship), 70 ; *San Carlos*, 70 ; *Africa*, 70 ; *St. Philip*, 70 ; *Conquistador*, 70 ; *Dragon*, 60 ; besides seven galleons. The forts demolished were : Boca Chica, 80 guns ; St. Joseph, 15 ; St. Jago 6 ; the fascine batteries, 20 ; Castello Grande, 63 ; and Fort St. Manzuello, 12 ; some 50 small vessels were destroyed, the total loss to Spain being estimated at about £800,000 sterling. Herein lies the best and most conclusive answer to the Admiral’s rivals and detractors. But if the critical novelist implied much against the naval Commander-in-Chief, he was justly scathing in his reflections on the direction of the military arm :—

“This piece of conduct, in choosing a camp under the walls of an enemy’s fortification, which I believe never happened before,

was practised, I presume, with the view of accustoming the soldiers to stand fire, who were not as yet much used to discipline, having been taken from the plough-tail a few months before. This expedient again has furnished matter for censure against the Ministry, for sending a few raw recruits on such an important enterprise, while so many veteran regiments lay inactive at home. But surely our governors had their reasons for so doing, which possibly may be disclosed with other secrets of the deep. Perhaps they were loath to risk their best troops on such a desperate service ; or the colonels and field officers of the old corps, who, generally speaking, enjoyed their commissions as sinecures or pensions, for some domestic service rendered to the Court, refused to embark in such a dangerous and precarious undertaking, for which refusal, no doubt, they are much to be commended."

It is to be remembered that this is no second-hand criticism ; Smollett himself, as surgeon's mate on one of the ships, took part in this very expedition against Carthagera, and, to that extent at any rate, "Roderick Random" was the biography of Tobias Smollett, M.D. It is not surprising that the author soon became disgusted with the naval service of that period, but his observant mind had stored material which he presently turned to excellent account. His types of the sailormen of George II.'s reign remain strong and virile for all time. For those who desire to study the inside of our naval history, "Roderick Random" affords sidelights of convincing and amazing vividness, discovering scenes that History, written as history, leaves unrevealed. Here, for example, is a picture from the ship in which Roderick serves as surgeon's mate :—

"The fire of the Spaniards proceeded from 84 great guns, besides a mortar and small arms in Boca Chica, 36 in Fort St.

Joseph, 22 in two fascine batteries, and four men-of-war mounting 64 guns each. This was answered by our land battery . . . and five great ships of 80 or 70 guns<sup>1</sup> that fired without intermission. We had not been many minutes engaged when one of the sailors brought another on his back to the cockpit, where he tossed him down like a bag of oats, and pulling out his pouch, put a large chew of tobacco to his mouth, without speaking a word."

Some one immediately examines the "bag of oats" and cries out that he is dead. "Dead," says his comrade, "he may be dead now for aught I know, but I'll be d——d if he was not alive when I took him up." When he is told to take the body away and throw it overboard, "D——n the body," said he, "I think 'tis fair enough if I take care of my own."

Then another voice is heard, and honest Jack Rattlin appears with one hand shattered to pieces with grape shot. When the surgeon expresses his sympathy, Jack points out that it was well the shot did not take him in the head, though "Death was a debt which every man owed, and must pay, and that now was as well as another time." The plucky fellow endures the amputation of his left hand without shrinking. Presently the surgeon's hands are more than full; "arms and legs were hewed down without mercy"; the place becomes a shambles; the chaplain drinks until he becomes delirious, strips himself, and smears his body with blood. Jack Rattlin, with his remaining fist, knocks

<sup>1</sup> Roderick's figures do not quite tally with other records.







TOBIAS SMOLLETT, M.D.

From a Painting by an Italian Artist in the National Portrait Gallery.

[To face p. 161.]

him down, and the purser sits upon the floor, wringing his hands and cursing the hour when he left his brewery at Rochester to engage in such a life of terror and disquiet.

And here is another vivid glimpse :—

“But of all the consequences of victory, none was more grateful than plenty of fresh water, after we had languished five weeks on the allowance of a purser’s quart *per diem* for each man, in the Torrid Zone, where the sun was vertical, and the expense of bodily fluid so great that a gallon of liquor could scarcely supply the waste of twenty-four hours ; especially as our provision consisted of putrid salt beef, to which the sailors gave the name of Irish horse ; salt pork of New England, which, though neither fish nor flesh, savoured of both ; bread from the same country, every biscuit whereof, like a piece of clockwork, moved by its own internal impulse, occasioned by the myriads of insects that dwelt within it, and butter served out by the gill, that tasted like train-oil thickened with salt.”

As to liquor ; let the Navy of to-day note this :—

“Instead of small beer each man was allowed three half-quarterns of brandy or rum, which were distributed every morning, diluted with a certain quantity of water” (taken from his allowance of a quart *per diem*) “without sugar.”

In the belief of “Roderick Random” such rations were designed by way of penance on the ship’s company for their sins ; or rather with a view to mortify them into a contempt of life, that they might therefore become more resolute and regardless of danger :—

“How simple (*sic*), then, do those people argue, who ascribe the great mortality among us to our bad provisions and want of water ;

and affirm that a great many valuable lives might have been saved if the useless transports had been employed in fetching fresh stock, turtle, fruit, and other refreshments from Jamaica and other adjacent islands, for the use of the army and fleet, seeing it is to be hoped that those who died went to a better place, and those who recovered were the more easily maintained. After all, a sufficient number remained to fall before the walls of St. Lazar, where they behaved like their own country mastiffs, which shut their eyes, run into the jaws of a bear, and have their heads crushed for their valour.

“As to our renowned General (meaning Wentworth), he attacked the place ‘with musquetry only,’ and succeeded accordingly, the enemy giving them such a heavy reception that the greatest part of the detachment took up their everlasting residence on the spot. When the remnant of the troops had re-embarked, the sick and wounded were squeezed into certain vessels, which thence obtained the name of hospital ships, though, methinks, they scarce deserved such a creditable title, seeing few of them could boast of their surgeon, nurse, or cook ; and the space between decks was so confined that the miserable patients had not room to sit upright in their beds. Their wounds and stumps being neglected, contracted filth and putrefaction, and millions or maggots were hatched amidst the corruption of their sores. Such was the economy in some of the ships that rather than be at the trouble of burying the dead, the commanders ordered their men to throw the bodies overboard, many without ballast or winding-sheet, so that numbers of human carcasses floated in the harbour, until they were devoured by sharks and carrion crows, which afforded no agreeable spectacle to those who survived.”

To aggravate the horrors of the situation the wet season now set in, with storms of thunder and lightning, and from the rising to the setting of the sun the rain descended on the despondent sailors. In these cruel conditions, in which complacent Ministers of the Crown expected British sailors to

uphold the honour of the Flag, fever soon raged with such violence throughout the fleet that the Admiral deemed it imperative to leave the dismantled forts and return to Jamaica—where store-ships had been long expected, and where the sick and wounded could receive better treatment.

The following unofficial letter from Admiral Vernon, dated April 25, 1741 (from on board the *Princess Caroline*, riding off Castillo Grande, harbour of Carthage), was written the day after the council of war had decided to return to Jamaica :—

“ From my last to you in the harbour in the beginning of the month, I was in hopes to have been able to have given you a better account of our conclusion here. I thank God, I can say, as far as depended on the sea to do, or was practicable that way, I carried it to the best end, having entirely destroyed all the shipping, and shall leave all their forts that guarded their harbour entirely demolished ; and I took care to secure by my ships a safe landing for the army as near Carthage as they could desire, without their having so much as a single musket shot fired at them ; and to land all their artillery, and whatever they desired afterwards. And when they had stayed as long as they cared for, I took the same care of their re-embarkation, without their having a musket shot fired at them, by having my ships well posted to cover them. And as army proceedings are no part of my province, I choose to leave that to their own relation. Sickness and want of water were the principal reasons *alleged* for their thinking it impracticable for them to proceed further, and it is certain the sickness is become very general amongst the forces since their re-embarkation. We are preparing to return to Jamaica with all possible expedition, that so large a train will admit of, that will require time to get them out of a harbour of so narrow an entrance. As there will be a necessity for the greatest part of my fleet going hence this summer, I am in hopes of soon receiving orders to come home with them myself, which I should be much pleased with,

being heartily sick of *conjunct expeditions with the army*. Through God's great mercy, I continue to enjoy a good state of health, to enable me to go through the burdensome fatigues of this command, which hardly allows me time to think of anything else. My last public letters were of the 5th December. I hope to hear you are all well upon my return to Jamaica, and that it will please God to give us a happy meeting this winter."

To a man so humane as Admiral Vernon it must have been heartbreaking to witness the sufferings of his men. Thomson, of "The Seasons" celebrity, described those sufferings poetically in his "Summer":—

" . . . You, gallant Vernon, saw  
The miserable scene : you, pitying, saw  
To infant weakness sunk the warrior's arms ;  
Saw the deep racking pang, the ghastly form,  
The lips pale-quivering and the beamless eyes  
No more with ardour bright ; you heard the groans  
Of agonised ships, from shore to shore ;  
Heard nightly plunged amid the sullen waves  
The frequent corse, while on each other fixed  
In sad presage, the black assistants seem'd  
Silent, to ask whom fate would next command."

Such was the lamentable climax of this memorable expedition. If nothing succeeds like success, nothing, it may be said conversely, fails like failure. Admiral Vernon had to bear in some measure the consequent burden, and yet in so far as he and the ships and the guns of the ships could attain successful results, those results actually were secured.

Readers of Smollett as historian who come across disparaging references to the Admiral should re-

member that Smollett the historian is explained by Smollett the novelist, and that the novelist was at too close quarters with the miseries of the seamen to be able to do justice to their Commander-in-Chief, or to the plan of campaign—a plan which only fell short of complete realisation through the shortcomings of the general in command of the troops.<sup>1</sup>

Among the naval officers who distinguished themselves under Vernon's command at Porto-Bello and in the attack on Carthagena special mention should be made of Edward Boscawen, a younger son of the first Viscount Falmouth. Boscawen in later years became member of Parliament for Truro. He conducted the siege of Pondicherry, and took Madras from the French; again he worsted France in the Bay of Lagos (1759). Like Vernon, he enjoyed the compliment of a nickname in the Navy. In fact, he was doubly nicknamed, being familiarly known as "Wrynecked Dick," and sometimes as "Old Dreadnought." His later services, in association with Wolfe in the St. Lawrence, were very notable. He died in 1761.

Boscawen, like Vernon, was introduced into a work of fiction, founded on fact. "The History of Edward and Maria" is not known to fame, but in its description of life on board ship and the portrayal of naval characters of the mid-eighteenth century it may be

<sup>1</sup> See further comments on Smollett's attitude and qualifications, p. 271.



fairly compared with "Roderick Random." The story was a short serial which appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1775. A lover who is packed off to sea encounters a fleet of twenty-three sail of "large, gallant ships," under Admiral Boscawen, and has an interview with that gallant officer, whom, "in a plain blue habit," he mistakes for one of the mates of the flagship. Edward expresses his views on the severity of his discipline and other matters. But the interest in the picture of the times lies in the unknown author's description of the life below decks and the eccentricities of the officers and seamen. It is excellent reading, coarse in parts and critical everywhere, but the exigencies of space forbid quotation.

It should be noted that a body of our American colonists took part in the expedition against Carthage, in the success of which they were greatly interested. Among them was a certain young officer named Lawrence Washington, who enjoyed the special confidence of Admiral Vernon. On the other hand, the Admiral won the admiration and esteem of the young American. Lawrence Washington so strongly believed in the British Navy that he even conceived the idea of procuring for his younger brother (then a boy of eleven) a warrant to enter the King's service as a midshipman.

After Admiral Vernon's return to England in 1743, Lawrence Washington maintained a correspondence with him, and doubtless it was through the Admiral's

interest that a midshipman's warrant was actually obtained for the younger Washington in 1746. The boy himself, then fourteen years of age, was eager to enter the King's service, and it was only through his mother's reluctance to part from him that ultimately the idea was abandoned. Thus did it almost come to pass that the illustrious George Washington was on the point of entering the British Navy.

Mr. Jackson, a friend of the Washingtons, wrote to Lawrence Washington in the following terms :—

“I am afraid Mrs. Washington will not keep up to her first resolution. She seems to dislike George's going to sea, and says several persons have told her it was a bad scheme. She offers several trifling objections, such as fond, unthinking mothers habitually suggest; and I find that one word against his going has more weight than ten for it.”

However, Mrs. Washington persistently opposed the plan, and it was abandoned.

George Washington was not the man to forget Admiral Vernon's services to the American colonies. It was in honour of the British Admiral that his brother Lawrence gave the name of Mount Vernon<sup>1</sup> to the famous estate on the banks of the Potomac River, and Mount Vernon became the home of George Washington himself after he had become Commander-in-Chief of the American armies and first President of the United States.

<sup>1</sup> From this it is evident that Lawrence Washington's opinion of the Admiral was very different from that formed by Tobias Smollett.

It was to Mount Vernon that Washington retired in 1797, at the end of his great public career, and so long as Washington and his home are remembered by the American people—which will be as long as the nation shall last—Edward Vernon cannot be forgotten.

In September, 1904—more than a hundred and sixty years after Vernon sailed for the last time from the West Indies—Dr. Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, paid a visit to Mount Vernon, and planted a tree beside Washington's grave.

Arriving at Jamaica on May 19, 1741, the Admiral received orders from England to retain no more ships than were absolutely necessary, and he therefore sent home Commodore Lestock with eleven line-of-battle ships and five frigates. He himself, after the arduous task imposed upon him, would gladly have returned, but letters received from the Duke of Newcastle indicated that the Government were fully satisfied with his services—as well they might be under the circumstances—and desired him to remain on the station.

Another council of war was now held, consisting of himself, Sir Chaloner Ogle, General Wentworth, General Guise, and Governor Trelawny, and it was decided to attack the island of Cuba. The King in his original instructions had advocated an attempt by the fleet to seize Havanna, Vera Cruz, Mexico, Carthagena, and Panama—but Havanna before all or either. That, however, was rendered

impossible by the untimely reduction in the strength of the fleet, which was equalled or outnumbered by the Spanish squadron lurking in those waters, and charged more especially with the protection of the Port of Havanna. To add Cuba to the possessions of the British Crown would have been a magnificent achievement, but General Wentworth with the remnant of the troops, reinforced by only 1,000 blacks from Jamaica, was not the man to do it. Havanna being out of the question, the fleet sailed for St. Jago (now known as Santiago), the principal port on another part of the island, and the favourite haunt of the Spanish privateers. The town, however, could not be attacked from the sea, owing to the narrowness of the entrance to the harbour and the risk of the fleet being driven by the wind on to the shore. For this reason the Admiral decided to land the attacking force in another bay, distant about seven leagues W.S.W. from Santiago itself. This was with a view to a surprise assault on the town from the land side, where it was entirely open and defenceless.

This course was decided on in council, with the full concurrence of the Brigadier, as shown by the terms of the following resolution, of which a minute was made on board the *Cumberland* on July 20, 1741 :—

“ Unanimously resolved—Immediately to set about doing everything in their power to comply with the principal view of His

Majesty's instructions, that of possessing themselves of the island or Cuba . . . and to do all jointly in their power to secure a footing in this island, till they secured His Majesty's further instructions."

The whole fleet entered the selected bay without mishap. For in the opinion of naval men it was the finest harbour in the West Indies, affording admirable shelter from the hurricanes which render those seas so dangerous to shipping, especially at the season of the year which was then approaching. To this excellent harbour, it may be added, the Admiral gave the name of Cumberland Harbour, in honour of the English royal duke.

The landing of the troops was effected rapidly, and without a hitch. Wentworth fixed his first encampment by the river side, about three leagues from the mouth of the harbour. A small detachment sent out to reconnoitre encountered a band of about fifty Spaniards, who fled precipitately, without firing a single shot. This bloodless victory was about all that General Wentworth accomplished. His men were marched a little way here and there, and then marched back again. They lost one man, and the Spaniards lost three. Finally, and much to the astonishment and disgust of the naval officers, the troops were marched back to the harbour, the general and his officers having resolved "that they could not march any body of their troops further into the country without exposing them to certain ruin ; and that they were firmly of opinion that their advancing with the

army to Santiago, in the present circumstances, was impracticable."

Thus was the military collapse at Carthagena followed by the burlesque invasion of Cuba. Was ever splendid opportunity more miserably wasted? None could have been more astonished than the islanders themselves. When first the troops appeared they fled from their homes in alarm and took refuge in the woods. As time ran on and nothing happened their sense of security returned. Finally, when the British force re-embarked and sailed away, the islanders arrived at the natural conclusion that the troops had never had any hostile intentions. It was not an invasion, but a military picnic. Spain lost nothing except what the fleet took from her while General Wentworth's manœuvres were in progress. The *Worcester* captured a Spanish man-of-war of 24 guns, the *Defiance* seized a store-ship, and the *Shoreham* took another vessel with 70,000 pieces of eight on board.

The fleet now returned to Jamaica, and Wentworth's next idea was to make a descent on Panama, but it is not worth while to dwell on the details of a project which proved as abortive as the feeble military enterprises that had preceded it. After much time and trouble had been devoted to his latest scheme, the general and his staff arrived at the unanimous resolution—they were always unanimous—"that an attempt on Panama was not consistent with His Majesty's



service, and should therefore be laid aside." Laid aside it was accordingly.

Meanwhile Admiral Vernon, fretting against the double harness that made this military officer his coadjutor, and deploring the loss of time, money, and prestige resulting from the vacillation of his colleague, had appealed in strong terms to the Home Government, asking for a searching public inquiry into every stage of the expedition. His daily prayer was "for a deliverance from being conjoined to a gentleman whose opinions he had long experienced to be more changeable than the moon."

It was the 23rd of September before the long-looked-for orders reached Port Royal, pursuant to which Admiral Vernon and General Wentworth were to return to England, Sir Chaloner Ogle taking over command of the fleet, with the advantage, however, which his senior officer had never enjoyed, of having a body of soldiers, to serve as marines, placed at his absolute disposal. Probably Admiral Vernon was perfectly right in the view he expressed in his final letter from Jamaica to the Admiralty, viz., that if the sole command had been in him both in the Carthagena expedition and in Cuba the British forces would have attained successful results and "with the loss of much fewer men than had died through the imprudent conduct of General Wentworth."

It must be remembered that Vernon had twice served in the West Indies in the wars of Queen Anne's

reign, and was universally acknowledged to be the best officer in the Navy of her successors. To such a man, prompt in action, conscious of his own special experience and ability, it must have been intolerably mortifying to be compulsorily associated with the fiasco that had recently attended the programme of British conquest. A million of money had been spent, and thousands of lives had been uselessly sacrificed.

On the 19th of October the Admiral set sail for England in the *Boyne*, and on the 6th of January, 1743, landing at Bristol, he was enthusiastically welcomed by the people. The nation, at any rate, did him no injustice, and to the rural population it must have been an impressive object-lesson to watch the heavy wagons laden with treasure taken from the Spaniards, as they rolled slowly through the countryside between Bristol and London.

The Admiral himself, on reaching his house in Jermyn Street, St. James's, lost no time in presenting himself at the Palace, and was received in audience by the King. A week or two later the Freedom of the City, already voted, was presented to him in the Guild-hall—scene of so many imposing functions in the history of the capital. Vernon, having taken the oath, and acknowledged the honour conferred upon him, handed £100 to the City Chamberlain to be distributed at his discretion among the poorer freemen. In the month of March, by way of further

honour, he was admitted an Elder Brother of the Trinity House.

It was at this period that the Admiral took his seat in the House of Commons as member, this time, for Ipswich. He became almost immediately an active supporter of the Opposition. Great changes had come about in the popular assembly since Vernon, representing his first constituency, had taken part in its deliberations. The powerful Minister who had loomed so large in national affairs for nearly forty years had passed for ever from the House of Commons. Walpole had fallen, and Wyndham was dead. Pulteney in office had proved himself a failure. Politically, everything was at sixes and sevens. One of the special subjects of angry dissension in Parliament was the continued employment by England of Hessian and Hanoverian mercenaries—a policy persisted in by office-holders under the Crown, in order that they might retain the favour of its wearer.

Lord Wilmington, Walpole's successor, and the figure-head of his party, was quite incapable of piecing together the shreds and patches of policy left at his disposal. Just as Lord Peterborough, in Spain, rode galloping about, as it was said, inquiring for his army, so might Wilmington have searched wildly and in vain for a compact body of supporters. In July, 1743, Lord Wilmington died. Thereupon confusion became even worse confounded. There was a struggle for supremacy between Lord Carteret, the King's favourite, and



*Photo]*

*[Emery Walker.*

SIR ROBERT WALPOLE.

From the Painting by J. B. van Loo in the National Portrait Gallery.

*[To face p. 174.*



Pelham, who was secretly prompted by Walpole, now Earl of Orford and would-be wire-puller of Parliamentary factions. Pelham prevailed, and doubtless, during the period of office, never forgot his astute prompter's advice to "Whig it with all opponents that will parley, but 'ware Tory."

In the midst of all the Parliamentary turmoil, above the din of sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, one voice was rising, strong and dominant in senatorial eloquence—the voice of Pitt the elder. In him, happily for England, a greater than Walpole had arisen, a greater than the King—whose disfavour never daunted him—a statesman of whose character Lord Chesterfield truly said, "It was stained by no vice, nor sullied by any meanness."



## CHAPTER IX

Vernon's association with Portsmouth—Episodes in the history of the naval capital—Henry VIII. and the *Marye Rose*—The wreck of the *Royal George*—Murder of the Duke of Buckingham—Honours paid to Charles I.—Siege, and entry of the Cromwellians—Marriage of Charles II.—The Duchess of Portsmouth—Visit of William III. to Portsmouth—Pepys at Portsmouth—Old Portsmouth inns—Scene of Nelson's last embarkation—The fleet intended to support Admiral Vernon in 1740—James Wolfe to join the expedition—Wolfe's letters from Portsmouth—His opinion of the inhabitants—Sailors and soldiers of the period—Wolfe's final embarkation—The *Royal William* brings his body back to Portsmouth—Other naval functions at Portsmouth and Spithead.

VERNON, like most naval officers of the past and of the present, must have been thoroughly familiar with Portsmouth Town and Portsmouth Harbour.<sup>1</sup> The Port and the roadstead at Spithead will ever remain associated with illustrious names and great events in naval history. Its first historical associations, however, are those of invasion rather than of conquest.<sup>2</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> He also knew the people for a short time as their Parliamentary representative.

<sup>2</sup> At a remote period the stronghold of the haven was Port Peris, now Portchester. The old Castle of Portchester is still a place of considerable interest.

body of Saxons landed at Portsmouth in 501. A fleet of thirty sail brought the marauding Danes in 838. When William of Normandy was preparing his invasion in 1066 Portsmouth sent out a fleet of 700 sail, which, however, failed to intercept the Norman fleet. Richard I. embarked here for Barfleur with 100 ships in 1194. King John, to whom is due the foundation of the Dockyard, embarked at Portsmouth with Queen Isabella in 1201. Henry III. sailed hence for St. Malo in 1230, and again in 1242 "with 300 knights and 30 hogsheads of silver from Spithead."

The town was burnt by the French in 1336. Edward III. assembled a splendid fleet of 1,600 ships and sailed from St. Helen's in 1346. The French again attacked the place in 1377, but were repulsed with heavy loss. They returned to the charge in 1416 and blockaded the English Fleet in the harbour. Margaret of Anjou landed at Portsmouth in 1445 and married Henry VI. at Southwick Priory, some ruins of which (in Southwick Park, north of Portsmouth Hill) remain until this day.

Nearly all our kings and queens had occasion to visit Portsmouth. Most of their royal and distinguished visitors landed there; and time would fail and space be wanting to tell of all the naval heroes who trod the streets of the old town and the decks of the old ships—those stately ships that have sailed to "their haven under the hill." The visit of Henry VIII. to Portsmouth in the summer of 1545 recalls exceptionally

memorable events. Henry had sent 30,000 men to Calais, and followed them in person. Boulogne was attacked by land and sea, and had to surrender to the British invader. Henry then returned to England, and the French king developed his plans of retaliation. A powerful French fleet presently appeared off the Isle of Wight.

Meanwhile an army of defence encamped on Southsea Common under the command of the Duke of Suffolk, and the King hastened to Portsmouth to expedite the fitting out of the English Fleet. Before our ships were ready the French galleys

“came along alle the southe coaste of Englande, even unto the Isle of Weight, and some of theyme came into the haven of Portsmouth and there rowed upe and downe, theire beinge never a shipp at that instante in that redynes, nore anye suche winde to serve iff they had bynne in redyness, to impeache theyme.”

Nevertheless Henry was determined they should be “impeached,” and the quaint chronicle of Sir Peter Carewe continues :—

“The Kyng, who upon the news hereof, was come to Portesmouth, he fretted, and his teethe stoode one and edge, to see the braverye of the enymyes, to come so neere his noose, and he not be able to encountre with thyme ; wherefore the beacons were sett on fiere throught the whole coastes, and forthwith such was the resorte of the people as were sufficient to garde the land from the entrince of Frenchemen ; likewise commandements were sent out for alle the Kyng’s shippes and all other shippes of warre which were at Lonndon and Queenborow or elsewhere, that they should with all speede possyble make haste and come to Portesmouth, which thinges were accordinglye performed.”

This Peter Carewe was an eye-witness of what happened later on when the King was with "the Lord Admyrall in his shippe named the *Great Harry*." It was the agile Peter who, to please His Majesty, went "upe to the topp" and discovered approaching a "fleete of men-of-warre." His relation, Sir George Carewe, was Vice-Admiral, and had been appointed to "a shippe named the *Marye Rose*, which was as fine a shippe, as stronge and as well appoynted as none better in the realme." King Henry now took boat and went ashore. The British Fleet promptly hoisted sail. But according to Mr. Froude's account the morning was breathlessly calm; the heavy sails hung motionless on the yards; the smoke from the chimneys of the cottages on shore rose in blue columns straight up into the air. The French had five-and-twenty galleys, the English none. From five-and-twenty long guns carried in the bow the enemy poured in shot after shot for full an hour, riddling the stationary hulks of the British line-of-battle ships, the French galleys being kept in almost constant motion.

The *Great Harry* suffered heavily, and, according to French accounts, would have gone down at her anchorage but for the offshore breeze that presently sprang up, enabling the big ships, supported by a number of swift frigates, to glide through the water. This changed the frowning fortune of the day.

It was now, however, that disaster overtook the stately *Marye Rose*. Her ports were open for action;

her guns were out, and these, alas! had not been properly secured to meet a change of weather. The wind came up with a sudden sweep, and the great ship heeled over slightly on one side. Her windward tier of guns broke loose and rolled across the deck, and so depressed her leeward side that the water rushed in at the open ports. The ship filled rapidly and sank with nearly every one of the 700 souls on board.

It was within a mile from the spot where the sea closed over her that another noble ship, the *Royal George*, went down, owing to similar carelessness, on August 29, 1782. This celebrated ship was built on dangerously top-heavy lines. She carried a main-mast 114 feet in height. She always served as a flag-ship, and many a great admiral, including Anson, Boscawen, and Rodney, trod her quarter-deck. When the *Royal George* went down her admiral, Kempenfelt, was on board.

“His sword was in its sheath,  
His fingers held the pen,  
When Kempenfelt went down  
With twice four hundred men.

Brave Kempenfelt is gone ;  
His victories are o'er ;  
And he with his eight hundred  
Shall plough the waves no more.”

Between the dates of these two great naval tragedies Portsmouth was the scene of many interesting events, some of which belong to the lifetime of James Vernon

or to that of his son. From Portsmouth harbour in 1627 the Duke of Buckingham sailed with 100 ships and 7,000 troops to relieve Rochelle. In the following year he was stabbed by Felton at a house in the High Street. Dumas, in "The Three Musketeers," with untrammelled imagination, describes the scene of the crime as the palace of the Admiralty. It appears, in fact, to have been an inn, and was known by the sign of "The Spotted Dog." The house, or part of it, still stands, and is numbered 11.<sup>1</sup> Probably there never were so many lies told on a tombstone as those fulsomely recorded on the monument to the Duke's memory in Portsmouth Parish Church.

"King Charles I. after his travels through all France and Spain, and having passed many dangers both by sea and land," landed at Portsmouth. Some loyal person or persons, in commemoration of the event, placed a leaden bust of the King in a niche of the squat, square building, at the seaward end of the High Street. The building formerly was the Governor's residence, it degenerated later into a powder magazine, and ultimately was used

<sup>1</sup> But the inn must have been much more extensive. Under the two adjoining houses, Nos. 12 and 13, which until recently belonged to the writer, is an arched wine vault 50 feet long, and it may be surmised that originally it belonged to the old inn in which Buckingham was murdered. From the title deeds of No. 13 that house appears to have been the residence of Sir Henry White, Mayor of Portsmouth, who was knighted in 1814 on the occasion of the visit of the Allied Sovereigns.



as a slaughter-house for cattle required to feed the seamen of the fleet. Every one was expected to salute with reverence the royal image, which was encircled with a wreath representing laurel and oak. When, however, Charles became unpopular, people showed some reluctance to doff their caps and bow to the graven image of the monarch ; and in 1635 the Governor (Lord Wimbledon) wrote a letter to the Mayor in which his worship was soundly rated for allowing the signs of the inns, with which the High Street was packed, to obscure a proper view of His Majesty's bust in the niche in the wall. "I will and command," wrote the Governor sternly, "all the officers and soldiers not to pass it by without pulling off their hats. I hope I shall need no other authority to make you do it " (*i.e.*, remove the signs), "for that it concerneth your obedience to have it done, especially now you have been told of *it* by myself."

Portsmouth, however, stood for the King in the troubles that followed, and was besieged by the Parliamentary forces in August, 1642. Lord Wentworth, who must have been a family connection of the Vernons, was in command of the Royalist troops. Ultimately articles were signed. The Royalists marched out and the Parliamentary troops marched in. The siege would have been continued, but for the threat of the garrison to blow up the magazine, where at least 1,200 barrels of gunpowder were stored. Thereupon the Cromwellians, by the mouth of one

of their numerous prophets, declared that it had pleased the Lord to finish a great work, wherefore all were admonished to "confess and acknowledge the Lord Jehovah to be on the Mount of Mercies to us, and for the people's prosperity and peace."

There was a great function at Portsmouth on May 21, 1662, when Charles II.<sup>1</sup> took to wife the most illustrious Princess Donna Catarina, infanta of Portugal, better known to English history as Catherine of Braganza. The marriage was celebrated at the Government Chapel on the Grand Parade, the site of the ancient *Domus Dei* and of the present Royal Garrison Church. The Bishop of London officiated, and there were present many representatives of the English and the Portuguese nobility. The register, illuminated on vellum, was subsequently removed to the vestry of the Parish Church, dedicated to St. Thomas à Becket, and is there at the present time. Charles had no particular desire for matrimony, but if he was not eager to possess Catherine, he had great occasion for her dowry, which amounted to some £500,000. By virtue of the marriage he also became entitled to the fortresses of Tangier and Bombay.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles granted an important charter to the borough. Royal charters granted to the town by previous monarchs commence with Richard I. and number altogether about seventeen.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Clarendon was supposed to have taken care that Charles should marry a woman who was not likely to bear children. His own daughter was married to the Duke of York, afterwards

Each of the great diarists has given us some account of the ceremonies connected with the royal wedding. Pepys dwells on the eloquence of the Bishop's sermon. Evelyn writes thus: "The Queen arrived with a train of Portuguese ladies in their monstrous fardingales or guard-infantas; their complexions olivador and sufficiently disagreeable; Her Majesty in the same habit; her foretop long, and turned aside very strangely. She was yet of the handsomest countenance of all the rest, and though low of stature, prettily shaped; languishing and excellent eyes; her teeth wronging her mouth by sticking too far out; for the rest lovely enough." The royal bridegroom himself, writing to Lord Clarendon, remarked of Catherine: "Her face is not so exact as to be called a beauty, though her eyes are excellent good, and not anything in her face that can shocque one." His Majesty, of course, was an unimpeachable judge of female attractions, and, moreover, a judge of character. It was he who when the Duke of York remonstrated with him for going through the Mall unattended, replied: "My dear James, take care of yourself. Depend on't no one will kill me in order to put you on the throne." He now declared to his correspondent

James II., and the inference is obvious. At a later period a mob cut down the trees before the Chancellor's house, broke his windows, and erected a gibbet—or painted it upon his gate—with this inscription: "Three sights to be seen—Dunkirk, Tangier, and a barren Queen."



SAMUEL PEPYS.

From a Painting by John Hayle in the National Portrait Gallery.

[To face p. 184.



that if he had any skill in physiognomy, Catherine was as good a woman as ever was born. No woman, good or bad, could have been worse treated by her husband. We are not told what the bride thought of the bridegroom at that time, but we know what she must have thought about him later on. Childless and miserable, the day came when her pride could endure any abasement, even the commiseration and confederacy of the King's mistresses. Burnet says she made desperate and despairing efforts to amuse herself by going about masked and into houses unknown, dancing and indulging in a great deal of "wild frolic."

It was on not the least favoured of his favourites that Charles bestowed the title of Duchess of Portsmouth. But perhaps it was not the greatest of the favours bestowed by royalty upon the town itself. Portsmouth has not much more reason to be proud of having furnished a title for Louise de Querouaille than of providing a Recordship, in the next reign, for Judge Jeffreys.

James Vernon's royal master, William III., visited Portsmouth on at least two occasions. On board the *Elizabeth*, at Spithead, in 1689, he knighted Sir Cloudesley Shovel (after the affair of Bantry Bay), and he also knighted Rooke, in the harbour, in 1693. Five years later Portsmouth electors returned the gallant Admiral as their member.

It is easy to understand that the sign-boards of the



Portsmouth hostelrys must have blocked the view of Charles I.'s bust. At that period the town was packed with inns and public-houses. The inn where Buckingham was murdered has already been mentioned. Pepys went to see the scene of the crime in May, 1661. He himself "lay at the 'Red Lion,' where Haselrigge, and Scott and Walton, did hold their council when they were against Lambert and the Committee of Safety." The "Redd Lyon" also was in the High Street. The house was demolished probably a hundred years ago. The "Fountain" Inn, near the Grand Parade, was a hostelry of some importance, and mainly patronised by officers of the garrison. Many years ago it was converted into a Soldiers' Institute. The "Crown" was a naval house, but the captains used to support the Parade Coffee-house. In the old days, when they wore red breeches, three-cornered hats, pig-tails, and buckles, the gallant captains were to be seen foregathering at this establishment both in time of war and time of peace. In fine weather they sat on forms outside the house smoking long pipes and imbibing endless draughts of potent liquor.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In more modern times the "Keppel's Head," on the Hard, near Portsmouth dockyard, became a famous naval house. The hotel was rebuilt in the reign of Queen Victoria. Admiral Augustus Keppel, whose trial by court martial is mentioned in another chapter, was a very popular officer in the service, and in Portsmouth, in the days of George III. Another Admiral Keppel, also very popular, died but a few years ago. The merits of these officers entitled them

Broad Street, a continuation of High Street, bending towards the "Point" of Portsmouth, contained other notable inns. The "Star and Garter" remains ; the "Blue Posts," ever to be associated with the adventures of Peter Simple and other novelistic celebrities, also lives in name though not in character. The old house was destroyed by fire many years ago.

The "George" Hotel in High Street, however, is the most important and interesting survival. In its early days it was a small thatched inn, having a stone water-trough in front of it, and known by the sign of the "Wagon and Lamb."

It was at the "George" that Nelson arrived, coming into the town by coach from London, in the early morning of September 14, 1805. He was then only forty-six, but never had a great commander been so mauled and battered in the service of his country. In the East Indies he had nearly succumbed to fever. At Honduras he had contracted dysentery, Cadiz had deprived him of an arm ; Corsica had bereft him of one eye. He was wounded in the forehead in the battle of the Nile. He had symptoms of rheumatic fever, and in writing to a doctor described how he felt the blood gushing up the left side of his head ; "the moment it covers the brain I am fast asleep." To Lady Hamilton he wrote : "My cough is very bad, and my side, where I was struck on the 14th of February, is very much

to be excepted from the remarks made elsewhere on the favours showered on the Albemarle family.

swelled ; at times a lump as large as my fist, brought on by violent coughing."

Yet this man, physical wreck though he was, unconquered and unconquerable in soul, was embarking once more, and for the last time, to enter upon a terrific contest with the fleets of France and Spain.

No wonder that the people worshipped him. When it was known that he had reached the town a crowd assembled in the street before the inn, eager to catch a last glimpse of their hero. They were not to be denied, these sailors and citizens of the naval port. Nelson escaped by the back door from the inn, but they got view of him on Southsea Common, and caught him up before his boat was pushed off from the shore. The anchor of the *Victory* still marks the spot where he embarked.

Every one wanted to wring him by the hand. "I wish I had two hands," said he, "and then I could accommodate more of you." Eager voices are bidding him God-speed, others cry farewell, and tears are on the cheeks of rough, strong men. There may have been in their minds that intuition which recalls an embarkation in remoter times, when those who parted from one who was great of heart sorrowed most of all that they would see his face no more.

In 1740, while Vernon, in the West Indies, was waiting, with such patience as he could command, for reinforcements (to enable him to follow up his success at Porto-Bello), he appears to have been elected

Member of Parliament for Portsmouth. A considerable time must have elapsed before he knew of the honour thus conferred on him. When the auxiliary fleet under Sir Chaloner Ogle assembled at Spithead, the Adjutant-General of Cathcart's force was Colonel Wolfe. With the Colonel was his young son James, who passed through Portsmouth and crossed with his father to the Isle of Wight. Young Wolfe, the future hero of Quebec, was not yet fourteen years of age, but he was actually going out as a volunteer to take part in Admiral Vernon's renewed attack on Spanish America.

That this should have been permitted seems extraordinary, but in those days boys began the business of life in the King's service when very young. So ardent were the military aspirations of young Wolfe, so inspired must he have been by the news of Vernon's achievements, that he overcame his mother's natural remonstrances and went down to join the expedition. Then, and always, Wolfe was deeply impressed with the spectacle of a great fleet. In later years he spoke of it as "the dreadful though pleasing sight of our mighty Navy." From the Isle of Wight he wrote to his mother in the formal style then customary :—

*"August 6, 1740.*

"DEAR MADAM,—I received my dearest mamma's letter on Monday last, but could not answer it then, by reason I was at camp to see the regiments off to go on board, and was too late for the post ; but am very sorry, dear mamma, that you doubt my love, which I'm sure is as sincere as ever any son's was to his mother.

"Papa and I are just now going aboard, but I believe shall not sail

this fortnight, in which time, if I can get ashore at Portsmouth or any other town, I will certainly write to you, and when we are gone, by every ship I meet, because I know it is my duty. Besides, if it was not, I would do it out of love and pleasure."

The boy writer then adds a paragraph on family matters, and subscribes himself "Your most dutiful, loving, and affectionate son, J. WOLFE."

Only nineteen years elapsed before the devoted mother received her last letter from the same hand. It came from the banks of the St. Lawrence, and soon afterwards Wolfe's great and loving heart had ceased to beat. Nelson, fighting triumphantly, fell on the *Victory*; Wolfe, in the hour of conquest, died on the Heights of Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

But in 1740 the fleet was not ready in a "fortnight." Vernon, at Jamaica, was sick with hope deferred, but the expedition did not leave Spithead until November, and young Wolfe did not sail with it at all. Attacked with serious illness, the boy had to be put ashore at Portsmouth. Thence he returned to his mother, who was living at Greenwich. Colonel Wolfe, however, sailed with the troops the Government were so tardy in despatching, and, it is said, ever afterwards recalled with horror the experiences he underwent before Carthage, under Wentworth, Lord Cathcart's incapable successor in the military command.

It is remarkable that two such famous men as

<sup>1</sup> At Portsmouth Wolfe, before his last embarkation, wrote a short poem, dedicated to the lady of his heart.

Washington<sup>1</sup> and Wolfe, in their boyhood, should have been within an ace of fighting under Vernon's command. Wolfe was destined to come to Portsmouth again and yet again in the service of his country. We find him there in 1758, on the eve of his departure with the expedition against Louisbourg and Cape Breton. A letter written to his mother under date of February 11, 1758, gives a vivid and not flattering picture of the Portsmouth of that period :—

“DEAR MADAM,—When any matter of importance to a country is resolved on, the sooner it is carried into execution the better. Delays are not only productive of bad consequences, but are very tiresome and very inconvenient, as every unhappy person whose lot it is to be confined for any length of time to this place can certify. The want of amusement and of society can be supplied with books and exercise, but the necessity of living in the midst of the diabolical citizens of Portsmouth is a real and unavoidable calamity. It is a doubt to me if there is such another collection of demons upon the whole earth. Vice, however, wears so ugly a garb, that it disgusts rather than tempts.”

This state of things in old Portsmouth was largely attributable to the callous action of the State. When a war ended, the Government suddenly disbanded great numbers of the troops who had fought for their country. When ships were paid off, the soldiers and sailors found themselves amid the familiar haunts of the port, its drinking dens and its brothels, and surrounded with pimps, crimps, and harpies of all sorts, both male and female. While their pay or their prize-money lasted

<sup>1</sup> See p. 167.



they rioted in drunkenness and wantonness. When their pockets were empty they preyed on others who came to the port, or else turned footpads or highwaymen.<sup>1</sup>

The inhabitants of the place were crowded together behind gloomy ramparts and fortifications. Ill-smelling moats, spanned by drawbridges, cut off the town from the adjacent country. No wonder that under such conditions Portsmouth, in the bad old days, however glorious its naval traditions, was socially a sink of iniquity.

On board the *Princess Amelia*, still in 1758, Wolfe writes another letter, from which we get further insight into the cause of the delays and difficulties which

<sup>1</sup> The sailors, however, were very fond of the play. There is a story that when Kemble was manager of the local theatre a sailor, who was going abroad the next day, persuaded the actor to open the house to him alone and play "Richard the Third." A bargain was struck for five guineas, and the sailor much appreciated his exclusive rights. Another story is of James Avery, the Pirate King, who stole into the town in a starving condition when a play based on his own supposed achievements and riches was being performed in the theatre. Ragged and cold, he falls and dies under the flaring playbill. Mr. Buchanan has a ballad on the subject, commencing :—

" At Portsmouth, in a tavern dark,  
One day of windy weather,  
A crew of reckless sailors sat,  
And drank their grog together."

Charles Dickens, a native of Portsmouth, introduces the theatre in connection with Vincent Crummles, who lodged "at Bulph's the Pilot, in St. Thomas's Street."

hampered our fleets when steam-power was unavailable. This time he is writing to his father :—

“DEAR SIR,—Our captain sends me word that a boat is just going ashore, and that I have time to write three or four lines. Mr. Boscawen, impatient to get out to sea, left Spithead the 15th, and brought his squadron here (St. Helens) to be ready for the first favourable change of wind, which has blown for some days directly against us, and with great violence. The weather is now mild and the moon old enough to light us in the night ; but our mariners see no immediate prospect of sailing. We are extremely well in this ship, have great room, and much kindness and civility from the commanders, and hitherto the motion has not had any great effect upon me.”

In the general way Wolfe, like Nelson, had to endure the miseries of what Thackeray humorously termed the marine malady.

The ships got away at last, but the *Invincible*, the finest ship of that rate in the then Navy (74 guns), well manned and well commanded, was left upon the sands. She ultimately went to pieces, but the crew and stores were saved. It may be added that the *Princess Amelia*, which sailed from St. Helens on February 19th, did not reach Nova Scotia until May 8th.

Here we are not concerned with the subsequent conquest of Canada, but only with Wolfe's associations with the Navy, the first naval port, and with naval commanders of the type of Vernon and Boscawen. From Portsmouth he sailed again, and for the last time, in February, 1759. In the interval Louisbourg had surrendered and Cape Breton had been conquered. This staggering blow to the pride and power of France was

largely attributable to the military genius of Wolfe, and now he was to essay a yet more arduous undertaking. There sailed from Spithead sixty transports, convoyed by six sail of the line and nine frigates under the command of Rear-Admiral Holmes. Another squadron of the great fleet, bound for the St. Lawrence, sailed a few days later. Wolfe, now a Major-General, had embarked with Admiral Saunders on board the *Neptune* (90 guns).

The story of Quebec need not be repeated. Wolfe, following the path of glory, reached our common goal—the grave. His body was embalmed and thus came back to Portsmouth. One sad November morning two signal guns from the *Royal William* at Spithead gave notice to the town and ships in harbour of the removal of the young General's remains. The coffin was lowered into a twelve-oared barge, which, towed by two other barges and followed in procession by a dozen more, steered for the landing stage. The solemn boom of minute-guns came from the ships then riding at Spithead, continuing until the barges had reached the Point of Portsmouth. There the regiment of Invalides and a company of Garrison Artillery were waiting to escort the bier. The coffin, placed in a travelling hearse, was taken through the town, while the bells tolled muffled peals and the guns upon the platform, looking seaward, maintained the minute-firing from the moment that the ships had ceased to voice the lament of the greatest Navy in the





LAUNCH OF H.M.S. "PRINCE OF WALES."



world. Thousands of people, standing bare-headed in the streets, watched the procession as the hearse went by, the Invalides marching with their arms reversed, the flags at half-mast, and on every side the signs of sorrow and respect.

Wolfe's body was conveyed to Greenwich and buried in the Parish Church beside his father.<sup>1</sup>

In 1773 George III. visited Portsmouth and embarked from the dockyard for Spithead, where he was saluted by twenty ships of the line, two frigates, and three sloops. The most powerful ship in the fleet was the *Barfleur* (90 guns), under the command of a member of the Vernon family and namesake of "Old Grog." The King dined on board, the Queen's health was drunk, and there was a vast amount of saluting. While at Portsmouth King George dined a second time on board the *Barfleur*, and the captain, kneeling, received the sword-taps which enabled him to rise up "Sir Edward Vernon." The gallant officer had rendered special service against the French in the East Indies, and particularly at Pondicherry.

<sup>1</sup> As a Major-General in Canada he received but £2 a day, and £500 was the magnificent sum bestowed on him for contingencies. Anticipating possession of his father's estate, he made a will bequeathing certain legacies. These, however, could not be paid after his death, and his mother, Mrs. Wolfe, appealed to the Government to provide the requisite amount or to make up her arrears of normal pay to that of a Commander-in-Chief, which was £10 a day. No grant was made in response to this appeal; nor was any pension paid to the General's widowed mother during the remainder of her life.



In 1794 Lord Howe, the sailor to whom Wolfe so firmly and so wisely pinned his faith, sailed with a splendid fleet of convoys for the East and West Indies. Prince Metternich, who was a witness of the scene at Spithead, described it as the most beautiful that human eye ever beheld. There is no need to recount the story of "the glorious First of June." Howe, victorious, returned to Portsmouth and walked quietly to Government House, and King George III., the Queen and Princesses, came over to inspect the triumphant fleet. The same occasion was seized to launch the *Prince of Wales*. The *Britannic Magazine* gave an account of the ceremony, with an engraving from which the accompanying plate is here reproduced. The Royal Family, with their suite, took up positions under a "rich canopy" in an admirable situation. The whole harbour was covered with boats and vessels, with bands of music and variegated colours. It was "as fine a launch as ever was beheld, and of the finest ship that ever dignified the British seas." She was christened by Prince Adolphus, who "threw the bottle of claret on her side as she approached the liquid (*sic*) deep, amidst the plaudits of tens of thousands of admiring spectators."

Those who are familiar with a "royal yacht" in the present day may note the different appearance of the *Royal George*—the King's yacht—in the Vernon period of shipbuilding. This "little" *George*, shown in the accompanying plate, will be seen no more





THE "LITTLE" GEORGE (ROYAL YACHT).

From a Photograph by West & Son, Southsea.

in Portsmouth harbour, the Admiralty having recently handed her over to the ship-breakers.

The following description of the Naval Capital, written by an unknown pen in Admiral Vernon's time (1749), is of some historical interest :—

“Portsmouth is situated in the Southern part of the County of Southampton, within the Island of Portsea, and in sight of the Isle of Wight. Its first Inhabitants came from the antient Portchester, when the sea left it to the mouth of this great Haven. This very populous Town, was first begun to be fortified by King Edw<sup>d</sup> IV. and compleated by King Hen. VII., who settled a Garrison here ; after which Q. Eliz<sup>th</sup> greatly strengthened it by additional works ; since when the Fortifications, as well to the Land as the Sea, have been greatly improved as to extent, strength and magnificence. By the advantage of an admirable Harbour and an increase of the Naval force of Great Britain, it is now one of the Principal places of Great Britain, for laying up its Royal Navy, as being well furnished with convenient Docks, wet and dry, Storehouses, Rope Yards, and all other necessities for Building, repairing and compleatly fitting out ships of the largest Rates. Here are also Dwelling Houses, and good accommodation for a Commissioner, and all the Subordinate Officers and Master Workmen, whose attendance is required for the better executing the services of the Navy in this Port, also a Royal Academy, with proper Masters to train up such young Gentlemen as are intended to serve their Country by Sea. Besides the Parish Church, there are two Chapels, one belonging to the Garrison, and the other to the Dock. Market Days are Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and there is a free Mart, which begins on St. Peter's Day and holds for 15 days. This place, by the favour of King Cha. II., gave the title of Duchess to Louise Rene de Queroualle, grandmother to his present Grace the Duke of Richmond, as it now does that of Earl to the Right Hou<sup>ble</sup> Lord Visc<sup>t</sup> Lymington. The Town was last incorporated by King Cha I. under a Mayor, Aldermen, Recorder, Bayliffs and Common Council Men. Their present Members of Parliament are Admiral Townshend and Admiral Hawke.”

## CHAPTER X

Vernon completes forty years' service—The Admiralty ask his advice on the manning and arming of the Navy—His trenchant criticism—"My Lords" resent his candour—Unjust removal of his name from Navy List—He blames Lord Winchelsea—On change of Government he is reinstated—Gazetted Admiral of the White—Recalled to active service when England threatened with invasion—Hoists his flag at Portsmouth [where H.M.S. *Vernon* still commemorates him]—The young Pretender puts to sea—H.M.S. *Lion* attacks the convoy—Jacobite force in the North—Retreat from Derby and defeat at Culloden—How Vernon checkmated the French in the Channel—Rodney's early achievement—The Kentish smugglers—Vernon hunted out of his command—Entick's tribute to his services—Horace Walpole's reluctant praise—Disparagement by other critics—Our defenceless coast in 1745—Vernon's letter to the Duke of Bedford—Why the sailors nicknamed the Admiral "Old Grog."

ADMIRAL VERNON had now served his country, under three successive sovereigns, for an aggregate of more than forty years. His days of foreign service were over ; he was yet to carry out active duties of great responsibility nearer home, in circumstances which will be mentioned on another page ; but, meanwhile, the benefit of his wide experience and practical judg-

ment was sought at the Admiralty on the important subject of manning and arming His Majesty's ships.

In June, 1744, the Secretary to the Admiralty, writing by direction of "My Lords," invited Vernon to state what, if any, alterations he would recommend. The Admiral's reply, which went fully into both branches of this vital subject (see Appendix), need not here be quoted in detail :—

"I have heard," he wrote, "that the builder told His Majesty King Charles II., of the *Royal Oak*, that he built a ship at once—meaning, I presume, of sufficient strength and proper proportions that did not want cobbling afterwards. It is certain these complete ships were ships of great strength and long duration, and that our modern ones are famous for neither ; but, to the great cost of the Crown, have been found eminently defective in both. . . . I have given it as my opinion in private, as well as in public, that the arbitrary power with which a half-experienced and half-judicious surveyor of the Navy hath been entrusted had half ruined the Navy ; and I am sure I am far from being singular in that opinion. . . . But as I think the basis and foundation of securing to this nation the blessings of the Protestant succession and continuance of this Royal Family upon the throne principally consist in the support and maintenance of our naval power ; so I think the duty of an officer and a faithful and dutiful subject of my Royal Master calls upon me to avow my sentiments in this particular."

The Admiral then proceeded to suggest that the Admiralty should call for competitive plans from the royal dockyards, and from private shipbuilders, select the best and order the surveyor to see that the new ships were built on the approved lines. He affirmed that ours was "a declining Navy in the art



of shipbuilding, at a time when France and Spain have been greatly improved in it," and deplored the fact that the Select Committee for which he and others had moved in the House of Commons (to inquire into the whole subject) had been "jockeyed off by those who dislike all inquiries," and "seem to think it to be too much for them."

This was the candid friend, with a vengeance. "My Lords" got what they asked for, but they did not like what they received. So much offence did the letter cause—because there was so much of truth in it—and so mean could "My Lords" show themselves if thwarted, that when the list of naval promotions came out only five days afterwards, the name of Vice-Admiral Vernon was altogether ignored, and in fact seems to have been actually removed from the Navy List.

Nicholas Haddock, a worthy sea-officer, but Vernon's junior, and Sir Chaloner Ogle, also his junior, became Admirals of the Blue, and nine other officers received advancement. This scandalous slight was the more glaring because the official letter which had just invited Admiral Vernon's opinion was actually addressed to him as Vice-Admiral of the Red, showing that his promotion had been intended. When the facts came to the Admiral's knowledge at Nacton, his country seat, he penned another letter (see text in the Appendix) to the Admiralty in which he blended satire with indignation :—

“As we that live retired in the country,” he wrote, “often content ourselves with the information we derive from newspapers on a market day, I did not so early observe the advertisement from your office.”

He remarked that from their recent correspondence “My Lords” must have been aware that he was in the land of the living, and proceeded to inquire why his name had been omitted from the list of Flag Officers. He wound up with a direct, but perhaps indiscreet, attack upon the First Lord (the Earl of Winchelsea), to whose action he attributed the injustice complained of. If his lordship had failed to place his name before the King, then he had “acted with a degeneracy unbecoming the descendant from a noble father, whose memory I reverence and esteem, though I have no compliment to make to the judgment or conduct of the son.”

To this letter no answer was returned, but within six months there was a clean sweep of the Board of Admiralty. With the change of Ministry, in December, 1744, came a new Board, headed by the Duke of Bedford as First Lord, and one of their first acts was to restore Admiral Vernon's name to the Navy List, in its proper place, namely, before that of Admiral Haddock. In the following April Vernon was gazetted as Admiral of the White (a higher rank than that of Vice-Admiral of the Red which the previous Board had intended him to hold), there being only two senior officers in

the published list—Sir John Norris and Admiral Matthews.

The Admiral now was sixty years of age, and might well have been glad to spend the remainder of his days in quiet retirement.

“I confess,” he had already written, “at my time of life, a retirement from the worry of business to prepare for the general audit, which every Christian ought to have perpetually in his mind, is what cannot but be desirable.”

But in July, 1745, when, again, there was widespread apprehension of invasion, the Government once more turned for help to the sturdy old sailor who had so often “braved the battle and the breeze.”

Called from his quiet country life in August of that year, Admiral Vernon hoisted his flag on board the *St. George* (90 guns) in Portsmouth harbour, where H.M.S. *Vernon*, the torpedo school of the modern Navy, is still a floating memorial of his services.

The Admiral's next in command on the *St. George* was the ill-starred Captain John Byng,<sup>1</sup> destined to be shot for alleged cowardice in the harbour from which he now sailed to defend the coasts of England.

A great fleet was being steadily prepared at Brest—designed ostensibly for the assistance of Spain in her long struggle with Great Britain, but in reality intended to favour the projected enterprise of the young Pretender. A division of the French Fleet,

<sup>1</sup> See next chapter.

cruising between Lisbon and Gibraltar, captured the *Blandford*, a British warship of 20 guns, but Captain Dodd, her commander, refused at the risk of his life to give any information as to the movements of the British Fleet (then under Commodore Osborne, and cruising off Cadiz). Less worthy was the conduct of two other British captains who, although in greater strength, permitted two French men-of-war to escape them in the Channel, greatly to the alarm and disgust of the whole nation.

The Pretender, who was a mere pawn in the hands of French Ministers, in pursuance of his crazy hope of wresting the Crown from George II., now actually embarked at Port Lazaire in Brittany with seven of his exiled adherents, including in the number the Marquis of Tullibardine. A sympathising Irish merchant had provided a frigate, which mounted 18 guns, with 900 stands of arms, 800 broadswords, and £2,000 in cash. The French Government, when it came to the point, furnished as convoy only one ship, the *Elizabeth* (66 guns), which on its passage to the coast of Ireland was intercepted by the *Lion*, man-of-war, commanded by Captain Brett, who at once engaged the enemy, and so mauled the *Elizabeth* in the course of a long fight that she was obliged to return to Brest, leaving the Irishman's frigate to continue her course unsupported. By the 23rd of July she had reached the Western Isles of Scotland. A few days later "the rightful heir" landed, and there was a

partial gathering of the clans, though it may be imagined that Scottish countenances became somewhat elongated when it was found that France, instead of sending, as had been anticipated, a powerful squadron with 16,000 men, well supplied with arms, ammunition, and the sinews of war, had practically left the young Pretender in the lurch. However, some 2,000 or 3,000 disaffected Highlanders gallantly took the field, raised the standard of the Prince Regent—rashly emblazoned with the motto *Tandem triumphans*, and proceeded to march on Fort William.

Proclamations were issued by the “Prince Regent” in the name of his august father, promising, after the manner of such documents, to secure the rights and liberties of their followers. The Union was to be dissolved and (delicate appeal *ad hominem*) the malt duty repealed. A slight success against a reconnoitring party sent out from Fort William inspired the little rebel force with the confident belief that it would march southward, *tandem triumphans*, and strike a blow at the very capital of England. London itself had no idea of waiting for that dire event. A camp was formed on Finchley Common—a memorial of which event is preserved in Hogarth’s picture of the Guards on their march to the rendezvous—and other measures were taken to give the Highlanders a hot reception long ere they reached the confines of the capital. But meanwhile in the north Jacobites were elated by the failure of the Government

troops—only some 2,000 men—to check the Pretender's progress. Our dragoons disgraced themselves by bolting, and General Cope had to escape in a boat to Berwick. Ministers, however, persuaded the King that nothing of importance had happened, or was likely to happen, and, according to Horace Walpole, His Majesty "discouraged all that would risk their lives and fortunes for his defence." Lord Chesterfield caustically said that "If we have a mind effectually to prevent the Pretender from ever obtaining this Crown, we should make him Elector of Hanover, for the people of England will never fetch another king from thence."

Field-Marshal Wade, with a stronger force, now was ordered to intercept the rebels, who had gained in strength. A prisoner carried before Wade, asked how many rebels there were, insolently answered, "Enough to beat any army you have in England." Carlisle actually was surrendered to the rebel force, and when news came that the Pretender had got as far as Derby and plundered the town many people, as Thackeray says, "began to look pale." Not so the little Hanoverian king, who, whatever his want of judgment, certainly had no lack of personal courage. He had borne himself bravely at Oudenarde. "He is wild, but he fights like a man," his royal father had said of him. He brandished his sword in defiance of the French in the battle of Dettingen, and on subsequent public occasions in England always proudly



appeared in his old uniform. "The people laughed, but kindly, at the odd old garment, for bravery never goes out of fashion." So now again he was quite ready to take the field in person. "Pooh! don't talk to me that stuff," he exclaimed, when at last they came to him with alarming tales about the rebels. His words were abundantly justified, for ere long the Jacobites discovered the hopelessness of their attempt, which ended in retreat and collapse, leading up to their final defeat on the field of Culloden, where the Duke of Cumberland, for the brutal treatment of prisoners, earned odium under the nickname of Billy the Butcher. The card—a nine of diamonds—on which he wrote his memorable order is still preserved by Lord Erroll.

But all this time the real danger lay southward, on our coasts, and here the responsible work of check-mating the French Navy devolved upon Admiral Vernon. On November 4th a King's messenger was sent to him post haste with intelligence that the French were actually embarking a considerable force of Scotch and Irish troops at Dunkirk, where the operations were under the direction of that brilliant soldier, Marshal Saxe. The Admiral was desired to prevent the ships getting out of Dunkirk, or to destroy them if and when they got to sea. This was a consummation devoutly to be wished, but much easier to propose than to achieve, having regard to the very inadequate force the Admiralty had placed at Vernon's disposal. "My Lords," of course, were well aware of this, and

writing on their behalf to the Admiral, the Earl of Sandwich admitted that they were uneasy to see—

“one of his rank and character in the service in a command which, to be sure, seemed not consistent with the dignity of his station . . . that such were the difficulties of the times and so many were the services required to be executed with an insufficient force, that though the inclination of the Lords of the Admiralty would be to see the Admiral at the head of the whole fleet of the kingdom, the circumstances, &c., &c.” (See Appendix.)

They gave him plenty of words, but very few ships ; and meantime, hostile preparations were being made not only at Dunkirk but also at Ostend.

Admiral Vernon, therefore, set himself to protect as far as he could, the mouth of the Thames and the Medway, and the ill-defended coasts of Kent and Sussex. So vigilant were his cruisers that they succeeded in preventing what they might not have been able to cure. The French programme now underwent a change ; the Admiral had checkmated the enemy's ships at Dunkirk and Ostend, but the new plan of campaign was to send a fleet of small vessels from Calais and Boulogne with the view of effecting a landing in the neighbourhood of Dungeness. While this new scheme was being watched certain privateers did manage to make a dart from Dunkirk. There was, be it remembered, no wireless telegraphy or telegraphy of any sort in those days, and no torpedo boats or swift destroyers existed to aid the operations of our sailing ships. Nevertheless, Vernon managed to get

intelligence of the movement, and one of his cruisers—the *Sheerness*, whose captain was the gallant Rodney—overhauled the French *Espérance*, and brought her into Dover.

Among the prisoners was the brother and successor of the luckless Earl of Derwentwater—who had paid the heaviest price a man could pay for his adherence to the House of Stuart. The capture also included some 30 officers and 140 soldiers. Soon afterwards the *Milford* fell in with the *Louis XV.*, carrying 12 French officers and 210 men, whom the British man-of-war carried prisoners to Leith. All this time Admiral Vernon had no more than four ships of the line, with a sort of ragged brigade consisting of sloops, privateers, tenders, and cutters yet; with this patchwork flotilla he managed not only to baulk the designs of the French at Dunkirk and Ostend, but also to deter them from sailing from Boulogne and Calais.

Among the Admiral's minor captures were five hoys, a dogger with five pieces of cannon, 100 barrels of gunpowder, and other military stores intended, of course, for the 12,000 French troops, who were impatiently waiting their opportunity to land upon our shores. At that period Vernon's difficulties were increased by the treacherous trade that was carried on by English smugglers between our own coast towns and the ports of France. It was estimated that fully 700 seamen engaged in smuggling had their homes in

or about the towns of Deal, Dover, Ramsgate, and Folkestone ; and, to their shame be it said, these men were ready at any time to sell information to the French.

Admiral Vernon's services at this anxious period were fully appreciated by his fellow-countrymen, but scandalously undervalued or misrepresented by those in authority. As will be seen presently, when Ministers no longer were apprehensive of the invasion which Vernon had averted he was (in his own phrase) "practically hunted out of his command by the operative hand of some malicious and industrious agent." In the words of Entick, Vernon was—

"contemptuously treated by those from whom the greatest regard was necessarily expected ; for the whole kingdom was sensible that the activity of this experienced commander had put an absolute check on the French and banished every idea of an intended descent."

Men may come and men may go, passing ever downward into the dusty ways of death, but partisanship seems to survive for ever. It is easy to understand that rivals, political opponents, and men of red-tape training must have regarded Admiral Vernon, with his outspoken opinions and his reforming energy, as a veritable thorn in the official flesh ; but it is lamentable and surprising that any writer of comparatively modern times should magnify the Admiral's faults—if faults they were—and ignore or minimise his splendid services. Yet a certain "Naval His-

tory of Great Britain" ignores the indisputable record of what Admiral Vernon was called upon to do, and did, in that critical hour when France was vigorously preparing to invade our shores. We read praise of Sir John Norris, Boscawen, Rodney, and others, but of the Admiral specially summoned to his country's rescue only the bare and unavoidable record, "Vernon commanded in the Downs."

Even Horace Walpole, who, for family and political reasons, could have cherished no love for the member for Ipswich, gives the Admiral something approaching his due :—

"Vernon," he writes, "that simple, noisy creature, has hit upon a scheme that is of great service ; he has laid Folkestone cutters all round the coast, which are constantly relieved, and bring constant notice of everything that stirs."

But if the writer of a modern "Naval History" has not a good word for Vernon when there is no opening for anything else, he has a bad word, and more than one, to set down concerning the earlier events at Porto-Bello and Carthagenæ :—

"There was at this time," says the author, writing of 1739, "among the most prominent members of the Opposition in the House of Commons, a naval captain, named Vernon, a man of bold and blustering tongue, and presumed, therefore, by many to be of a corresponding readiness of action."

Conscious of the allurements of alliteration, one may cheerfully condone "bold and blustering," but the

inference that Vernon had no "corresponding readiness of action" seems to be as spiteful as it was inaccurate. Phrases are cheap, and it is easy and not dangerous, more than a hundred years after a "demagogue" has ceased to "bluster," to heap opprobrium on his name. But if historians ought to possess in some measure the judicial mind, it is singular to notice that there is no word of condemnation for Walpole and his colleagues, who, in the matter of Porto-Bello, imitated the policy of David (though not for David's reason) by putting Uriah the Hittite in the forefront of the battle. "They caught with eagerness at the prospect of delivering themselves from Vernon's harangues," or, in other words, eagerly sent him, as they believed, to assured defeat, if not to death!

But in the eyes of his enemies, when, as rarely happened, the Admiral failed, it was all and always his own fault! If he succeeded, "No boaster ever enjoyed more singular or complete good fortune." Yet of the officer of whom he prints these words this naval historian is compelled to admit on another page that "he was undoubtedly a brave man," and elsewhere—speaking of Porto-Bello—"the inhabitants he treated with a humanity which does him honour, especially since it was at variance with the inclinations of his men."

Reading such passages as have been cited, one cannot but feel the vital need to refer to contemporary records before condemning dead men who happen to be dis-



paraged by modern writers. To hold the balance is difficult, but the quality of mercy should be remembered even in historical judgments. To belittle the living is a spiteful act; to disparage the dead is scarcely forgivable.

The amazing insufficiency of our system of coast defence at the time when Marshal Saxe was organising his forces on the other side of the Channel is illustrated by the summons to arms that was addressed to the undrilled inhabitants of Kent. On December 20, 1745, Admiral Vernon sent a letter "to John Norris, Esq., at Deal Castle, or to the Mayor of Deal in his absence," with urgent warning of the impending descent of the enemy, and of the need for Deal and the neighbouring towns to assemble the inhabitants for their common defence. It all seems very much like romance, looking back from the present year of grace, but what wild excitement there would be if a like invasion were threatened in our own day! The Admiral notified that his cruisers' signal for discovering the enemy's approach would be "their jack-flag flying at their top-mast head, and firing a gun every half-hour." The Deputy Lieutenants of Kent promptly printed the letter and supplemented it with a call to the people to stand up for the defence of their King, their country, their liberties, and their lives. They were to assemble on Sunday morning, the 22nd of December, "with such arms and ammunition as they have, and to bring two days' provisions of victuals with them." The appeal

was circulated in the towns within twenty miles of the coast, and altogether 4,000 good men and true mustered with the best arms they could bring, including pickaxes, shovels, and axes. Not less loyal and ready was the attitude in the capital. The Spitalfields weavers offered to form a corps of a thousand men, and the lawyers of London organised themselves into a "devil's own" brigade, under the command of Lord Chief Justice Willes, with the intention of mounting guard over the King and the Royal Family at St. James's Palace.

In the Channel the captains of three Dover privateers rendered good service to the naval squadron, and their services were cordially acknowledged by Admiral Vernon in a letter commencing, "Brother sailors," and expressing "heartly thanks for the honest and laudable zeal" they had shown for the protection of their country. He assured them that justice should be done to the merits of their services, and concluded, "I am, brother officers, both yours, and all our honest brother sailors' friend, and humble servant, E. VERNON."

Yet the writer of this letter was the man whom the author of the before-mentioned "Naval History" assails for his blind arrogance, his bitter tongue, and his impracticable temper, "which disqualified him from ever rendering any service to his country, except when aided, as at Porto-Bello, by the most extraordinary good fortune."

Admiral Vernon was hunted out of his final com-

mand by the trivial and specious pretext that he was not justified in having warranted a certain gunner on board the *Pool* (when that vessel was without that very necessary officer). The Secretary of the Admiralty sternly informed the Admiral that "My Lords" did not approve of what he had done, and requested him to withdraw the warrant. That, however, Admiral Vernon flatly refused to do, and tendered his resignation.

He struck his flag on January 1, 1746, and handed over the command in the Downs to Vice-Admiral Martin. If the Admiral had allowed one of his ships to go to sea without a gunner, official censure would have been reasonably justified. But it mattered not what he did. His enemies were bent on displacing him, and the Admiralty were ready to lay hold of any trumpery excuse that came to hand. It was with this knowledge that Vernon, now that he had completed his task, resigned the command, and gladly returned to his pleasant home in Suffolk. In a letter to the Duke of Bedford he showed plainly that he understood the influences that were at work, and stoutly justified his action as a naval commander in the matter of the appointment that was called in question.

It should be borne in mind that, apart from the Jacobite invasion, things had not been going very well for England. In the Mediterranean Admiral Matthews had attacked the Spanish Fleet, and but for the disobedience of Lestock, the second in command

(who had formerly served under Vernon in the West Indies), would have won a brilliant victory. Courts martial were held—

“But the Admiralty was determined to crush Matthews, as being a member of the House of Commons and belonging to the party of the Opposition, and the consequence was that, though Lestock’s misconduct was clearly proved, he was acquitted, and Matthews was sentenced to be cashiered and declared incapable of any further employment in His Majesty’s service.”

The quotation is from Mr. Yonge’s history. He describes the Matthews-Lestock episode as perhaps the most disgraceful transaction in the history of the Navy or of the country ; but, strange to say, he sees nothing discreditable in the treatment which Ministers accorded to Admiral Vernon.

At Fontenoy, too, the British, or rather the English, had fared badly against the French, whose allies, the “heroic Irish soldiers”—to quote the tablet still standing on the field of battle—claimed to have changed defeat into victory. Doubtless many of the survivors were with Marshal Saxe—eager to carry out the plan of campaign which Vernon was instrumental in defeating.

The seamen of the Fleet now had seen the last of their dauntless old commander. The veteran officer, whose pluck and seamanlike qualities had oftentimes inspired them with confidence and admiration, would tread the quarter-deck no more. He had long been known to the sailors as “Old Grog,” a nickname that

had its origin in his habit of wearing grogram breeches—Dr. Brewer says that it was a grogram coat or cloak—which he put on in foul weather. Possibly he had a whole suit of grogram, which is a strong, coarse material made of silk and mohair. It must be remembered that in those days every officer wore pretty much what he pleased, and even able seamen were not required to conform to regulation style and material. Admiral Sir E. R. Fremantle, in his published reminiscences, mentions that even in the days of the early Victorian Navy some of the men wore fur caps and “laming” (blanket) suits. Many wore earrings and short curls in front. The late veteran Admiral, Sir Harry Keppel, well remembered the time when British seamen wore pigtails. They still wear the broad blue collar that was designed to keep the grease from the queue off their tunics. Nowadays, of course, neither officers nor men may wear even a moustache or whiskers without a “naval beard,” trimmed according to regulation pattern.

Admiral Vernon's personal appearance bespoke the man of character. His eyes were piercing, and his expression keen. Though short of stature, he bore himself as one who had the habit of command. He was a strict disciplinarian, but not a tyrant of the quarter-deck. It is not recorded of him, as it is of Sir William Parker (an admiral who had been one of Nelson's captains), that when his officers spoke to him he required them to stand with their hats off; nor that,



like Sir Fleetwood Pellew, he flogged a bandsman for "not playing heartily at all times." Both officers and men felt that they could trust his courage and his seamanship. It has been said that Sir John Fisher carries the Nelson tradition into our modern Navy. It might also be said that Vernon anticipated that tradition. He knew how to exact respect from foreign navies. From the time of Alfred the Great the British Navy had claimed to be "first among equals," the salute coming from the foreigner, and being acknowledged by the British warship. The Dutch refused to recognise the international rule in 1675, and the French disputed it in 1704—when Vernon had been only two years in the naval service. Since then all foreign navies have conformed to precedent.

Vernon was genuinely solicitous for the welfare of the seamen. He personally visited them in their hospitals, and inspected their provisions and kits. He must needs have been popular as well as respected in the Navy, or there would not have been such an enormous number of public-houses "called after him" in all the naval ports.

In 1745 the Admiral, in his last command, introduced a reform that in itself ought to earn for him the gratitude of every rational being, ashore or afloat. Hitherto our seamen had been supplied with raw spirits—chiefly with fiery rum, of which extra quantities were served out on extraordinary occasions. The Admiralty did their best to send them mad with poisonous alcohol,



and when, as sometimes happened, they behaved like maniacs, they were flogged and ironed like brutes. Vernon now introduced a revolution that, doubtless, made him many enemies amongst those who hold that nothing can be better than the old system of the good, or bad, old times. He gave orders that water should be mixed with the rum, and to this mixture, as originated by "Old Grog," the sailors gave the name of grog—a term henceforth, in its enlarged significance, to hold its place in the English language.

And yet in a newspaper of comparatively recent date a correspondent was informed that "grog" was so called because Admiral Vernon was a very stingy officer who, in effect, wanted not to rob the poor man of his beer, but to water the rum of the British seaman.

To those who believe in temperance in all things—from historical criticism to the consumption of beverages—it will seem that, if Admiral Vernon had done nothing else for the Navy, the enforced dilution of rum would justify posterity in saying, "*Si quæris monumentum, circumspice!*"

Poisoned with bad food and drugged, or maddened, with ardent spirits, no wonder that the mortality in the Fleet reached a terrible percentage in the Navy of the first three Georges.

## CHAPTER XI

Scare of invasion in 1755—France rides the high horse—England's reply—Captain Cockburn's gallant exploits—Hessians again in England—Uniform of the period—French designs on Minorca—Byng's failure—Surrender of British garrison—Indignation in England—Feeling against Byng—Lampoons and epigrams—Memorable court martial—The question at issue—Stern requirements of the law—Naval discipline in ancient times—The law codified in George II.'s reign—Byng recommended to mercy—Proceedings in Parliament—Sentence of death confirmed—The Admiral's courage at the last—Executed on the *Monarque* in Portsmouth harbour.

TOWARDS the end of 1755 news came to England of a nature to disquiet those who, like Vernon, were alive to the need of maintaining our naval supremacy. France was equipping powerful armaments at Toulon and also at Marseilles. What was the object of those warlike preparations? Did they indicate plans for a renewed attempt at invasion, or were they aiming either at the capture of Gibraltar or the reduction of Port Mahon?

England had been taught to regard the latter as a place of arms second only in importance to Gibraltar itself. At St. Philip's (the fort that pro-

tected Port Mahon) we had a garrison—and as might be expected from the methods of Ministers, that garrison was far too weak for its position. It was clear that war-clouds were gathering once again, and that wheresoever they might presently break, it would be to the detriment of Great Britain—affecting either her island shores or her possessions, trade and navigation, in the Mediterranean.

But Ministers continued either supine or hoodwinked. Early in the new year—1756—some diplomatic correspondence passed between the Court of St. James's and Versailles. Henry Fox was the English Secretary of State and M. Rouillé was the Foreign Secretary of France. The latter maintained that his royal master had been sincerely desirous to maintain the public peace, but threw doubts on the good faith of England, comparing with the pacific assurances that had passed on the subject of America the orders for hostilities given in November, 1754, to General Braddock, and in 1755 to Admiral Boscawen. The French Minister declared that—

“The attack and capture in July last of two of the King's ships in the open sea, and without a declaration of war, was a public insult to His Majesty's Flag; and His Majesty would have immediately manifested his just resentment of such an irregular and violent proceeding, if he could have imagined that Admiral Boscawen acted by the orders of the Court. . . . But seeing that the King of England, instead of punishing the robberies committed by the English Navy, encourages them, demanding from his subjects fresh supplies against France, His Majesty would fall short in what he owes to his own glory, the dignity of the Crown, and the

defence of his people, if he deferred any longer the demanding of a signal reparation for the outrage done to the French Flag and the damage done to the King's subjects."

The French Minister then proceeded to demand immediate and full restitution of the captured war-ships, also of certain captured merchantmen, with their officers, crews, and stores :—

"But if, contrary to all hopes, the King of England shall refuse what the King demands, His Majesty will regard the denial of justice as the most authentic declaration of war, and as a formed design in the Court of London to disturb the peace of Europe."

The reply, sent by Mr. Fox from Whitehall on January 13, 1756, was short and to the point. The letter of His Excellency the French Minister, said Fox, had been immediately submitted to King George :—

"But though the King will readily consent to an equitable and solid accommodation, His Majesty cannot grant the demand that is made of immediate and full restitution of all the French vessels, and whatever belongs to them, as the preliminary condition of any negotiation ; His Majesty having taken no step but what the hostilities, begun by France in a time of profound peace (of which he hath the most authentic proofs), and what His Majesty owes to his own honour, to the defence of the rights and possessions of his Crown, and the security of the kingdoms, rendered just and indispensable."

The issue at once passed beyond the range of diplomacy, as obviously it was meant to do. British subjects were ordered to leave France. English vessels were seized in several French ports, and the Most

Christian King enjoined his subjects to fit out privateers, promising a premium of 40 livres for every gun, and the same bounty for every man taken on board a British warship.

On one side Vice-Admiral Osborne and Sir Edward Hawke were sent to sea with squadrons aggregating about 27 guns, and the King sent a message to Parliament, declaring (either by design or by mistake) that the French were going to invade Great Britain or Ireland, and that His Majesty was determined to exert all the force God had put into his hands to repel so daring an attempt, and doubted not of the support and concurrence of Parliament. Incidentally the royal message mentioned that England again was to call in aid a body of mercenaries, and, indeed, that Hessian troops were coming over without delay.

Parliament and the people promptly pledged their "support and concurrence." The City of London was specially pious and profuse in its assurances, and His Majesty thanked all and sundry for such "an affectionate and seasonable address."

The Hessians presently came over, and were described as making "a fine appearance, being generally straight, tall, and slender. Their uniform is blue, turned up with red and laced with white ; and their hair, plaited behind, hangs down to the waist." These pig-tailed warriors were quartered in the Hampshire towns and villages (the port of arrival was Southampton). When the innkeepers grew tired of them, the

Hessians built a number of huts, to contain 60 men each. In the middle of every hut was a great fire, round which the gallant fellows gathered. There was nothing else for them to do. Dust had been thrown in the eyes of English Ministers. The French were not coming here at all, and the Most Christian King must have smiled broadly when he read about our Hessian auxiliaries sitting round their fires in an English winter.

The Hessians themselves seem to have been good fellows, well disciplined, and in many respects an example to the Tommy Atkins of that period. It was at about that date that Wolfe, marching with his regiment from the West of England, took part in a general review upon Blandford downs, near Salisbury. "There are officers," he wrote to his father, "who had the presumption and vanity to applaud our operations, bad as they were; but I hope the General saw our defects, and will apply a speedy remedy, without which I think we are in imminent danger of being cut to pieces in our first encounter."

The British foot-soldier did not wear his hair after the fashion of the Hessian, but his uniform was pretty much in the same style—handsome and showy, but quite unsuited for the stricken field. By a warrant of George II., dated July 1, 1751, for establishing uniformity in the clothing and colours of the several regiments, we find that the uniform of the Twentieth—Wolfe's regiment—was thenceforth to have facings



of pale yellow, the coat of scarlet, to be turned up with yellow, and ornamented with white lace ; waistcoat and breeches scarlet, with white gaiters reaching above the knee. The hat was "cocked" and bound with white lace. This was the sort of uniform that General Braddock and his ill-fated men wore through the American wilds and woods. One can imagine that the Indians (who scalped so many of the routed British after the affair of Fort Duquesne) must have appreciated the military finery that fell to them as booty on that disastrous day.

But while the Hessians were sitting round the fire in England the French Fleet had sailed from Toulon for Minorca. For our part we were on the move at last. To man the fleet the Government had recourse to "the hottest press for seamen that had ever been known" (in spite of all that Vernon had said upon the subject), and Horace Walpole, lively recorder of events, writes : "We proceed fiercely in armament."

It was imperative now, if possible, to reinforce General Blakeney's small garrison at Fort St. Philip, and to that end Admiral Byng sailed with 10 ships of the line and a body of troops that was shamefully inadequate for the occasion. Byng was to pick up more troops at Gibraltar, but when he got there they were not available. Delays of weather, delays of all sorts, handicapped the Admiral from the first. He was doing, and likely to do, small things, whereas the British public confidently expected great things.

Was he not the son of Queen Anne's Byng, afterwards Earl of Torrington? Many people supposed that Byng the Second would prove himself another Edward Vernon, and achieve at Port Mahon as much as Vernon had accomplished at Porto-Bello.

Meanwhile the French Fleet had taken the wind out of our sails, and 16,000 men had been landed to invest the fortress held by the British under Blakeney, who had a mere handful of men compared with the besieging force.

The rest is too well known to need recapitulation in detail. The British people had been gulled. The nation, big with expectations of success, waited impatiently for news of victory, and all the time victory in the fullest sense was quite impossible. There was no victory.

The only naval achievement of the summer of 1756 was the dashing exploit of Captain Cockburn in the cutter *Hunter*, a little craft that carried only 40 men and a few swivels. Hovering off Brest by day and night, Cockburn seized an opportunity to enter the harbour in his boat with only five men. This daring officer, with a pluck worthy of the best traditions of our Navy, rowed round the French warships and noted full particulars for the information of the British Admiralty. He then cut the cable of a small French vessel, boarded her, and sailed out of the harbour under the guns of the French men-of-war. This captured vessel carried a cargo of wine, and we may be pretty

sure that there was much carousing that night on board our ships.

But Byng had failed, failed miserably. His account of the encounter with the French Fleet off Minorca so enraged the King and his Ministers that both he and his rear-admiral, West, were immediately superseded and ordered home ; warrants were lodged at the several English ports to put Byng under arrest instantly on his arrival. Sir Edward Hawke was despatched to take over the chief command in the Mediterranean. Byng was to be tried by court martial.

Thereupon an immense and virulent controversy had its beginning. Everything was in dispute, except, perhaps, the one thing that was indisputable, viz., that, in the face of an enemy, strong on sea and land, our little garrison at Fort St. Philip had been left to its fate. Blakeney had to capitulate, making the best terms he could with Marshal Richelieu, who, "desirous to show General Blakeney the regard due to the brave defence he has made, grants to the garrison all the honours of war under the circumstances (*sic*) of their going out for an embarkation."

We had lost the important fortress of St. Philip ; we had lost Minorca, possessions which were considered of the utmost consequence to the commerce and naval strength of the country. This had come about (as the citizens of London, in an address, declared) "without any attempt by timely and effectual succours to prevent or defeat an attack . . . and when your

Majesty's Navy was so evidently superior to theirs," (the French).

It was regarded as an indelible reproach to the British nation. Nor can one wonder at the indignation of the people. The City at the same time took occasion to lament the want of organised defence of the realm, more especially a constitutional and well-regulated militia, "the most natural and certain defence," against invaders, as thereby British fleets and armies might be more securely employed abroad. This, indeed, was sound sense—wisdom for all time, and, in all times hitherto, foolishly disregarded by Government after Government. The more the French exulted, the greater was the exasperation aroused in England. Pamphlets, ballads, and epigrams were circulated in every direction. A medal was struck representing on the obverse Byng receiving a bag of gold, and inscribed—

"Was Minorca sold  
By B—— for gold?"

On the reverse Blakeney was depicted holding the flag above a fort, by way of signal to a distant ship, and here the inscription was—

"Brave Blakeney reward,  
But to B—— give the cord."

Yet, after all, the French Fleet had won no victory.

The fleets, to be accurate, had avoided the risk of defeat by running away from each other—

“We have lately been told  
Of two admirals bold,  
Who engaged in a terrible fight ;  
They met after noon,  
Which I think was too soon,  
And they both ran away before night.”

With lampoons flying about in this fashion justice to Byng became difficult, if not impossible of attainment. Trial by pamphlet, by Parliamentary debate, or by any other method without the essentials of judicature, must ever be fraught with danger. The evidence, and the evidence alone, should form the bedrock of a judgment. Even so, the fallibility of human methods may result in a miscarriage of justice. But without the safeguards of a judicial trial resultant injustice is almost a foregone certainty. Admiral Byng was tried by naval court martial according to the custom of this country. Whether he ought to have been found guilty the writer or reader of to-day should hesitate to judge, unless he has read and had the ability to weigh the evidence upon which the finding was founded.

But there are other aspects of this memorable trial upon which, with sufficient data at hand, it is quite permissible to express an opinion. Byng was not the man for the work entrusted to him, and the Admiralty



did not even see to it that he undertook that work under fair conditions.

He was judged by his peers, and they found that the prisoner did not do his utmost to relieve St. Philip's Castle ; and also that during the engagement at sea he did not do his utmost to take, seize, and destroy the ships of the French king. These things he was bound to do, and he failed to do them. But there is a great distinction between failing to do what other people regard as your " utmost " and being guilty of the cowardice or treachery so freely imputed to the unlucky Admiral. The court distinctly stated that there was no evidence of any backwardness during the action, nor any mark of fear or confusion either from Byng's countenance or behaviour ; but, on the contrary, that he seemed to give his orders coolly and distinctly, and did not seem wanting in personal courage. The court did not believe that his misconduct arose either from cowardice or disaffection, and therefore unanimously and earnestly recommended the Admiral as a proper object of mercy.

Finding the facts as stated, the court nevertheless passed sentence of death. There was no alternative. Admiral John Byng was unanimously adjudged " to be shot to death at such time and on board such ship " as the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty should direct.

The law allowed it, and the court awarded it—because the court was obliged. The Navy had strict



statutes and most biting laws. By the 12th Article of War, under which the Admiral came, no other sentence was possible. But the president and members of the court martial set forth in a special representation to the Admiralty the “distresses of our minds . . . in finding ourselves under a necessity of condemning a man to death . . . even if the crime should be committed by an error of judgment only; and therefore, for our consciences’ sakes as well as in justice to the prisoner, we pray your lordships in the most earnest manner to recommend him to His Majesty’s clemency.”

Our marine code always has been drastic and Draconian, just as the law of the land, speaking by way of distinction, had for centuries remained barbarous in its severity. It is enough, by way of ancient example, to quote the Proclamation of Richard I. containing laws for those that embarked for the Holy Land :—

“Richard, by the Grace of God, King of England, and Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, &c.

To all his subjects sailing in this expedition to Jerusalem, greeting :—Be it known unto you that we, by the unanimous advice of faithful men, have made the following laws :—

1. He who killeth any person on shipboard shall be tied to him that is killed and cast into the sea.
2. But if the murder be committed on shore, he shall be tied to the dead person and buried with him in the earth.
3. If any one shall be convicted on credible evidence that he had drawn his knife against another; or that he had drawn blood of him, he shall lose his hand.
4. And if any one strikes another with his hand without drawing blood, he shall be ducked thrice in the sea.
5. Whosoever shall use opprobrious or contumacious speeches, or

curse his companion, shall pay as many ounces of silver as he shall have reviled or misused him.<sup>1</sup>

6. Any one convicted of theft shall be shorn or shaven *ad modum campionis*, and boiling pitch poured upon his head, and strewed with the down of feathers that he may be known, and set ashore at the first port the fleet shall make.

Witness, the King himself, at Calais."

In the very reign in which Byng was tried and condemned an Act (22 George II.) had been passed by way of codifying the laws then relating to the government of the royal ships and forces at sea. Under this Act, however, no sentence of death given by court martial held within the narrow seas (except in cases of mutiny) was to be put into execution until the proceedings had been laid before the Admiralty and directions given therein.

Receiving the finding of the court and the special representation above referred to, the Admiralty prayed the King that the opinion of His Majesty's judges might be taken, whether the sentence was or was not legal. The judges—twelve in number—in due course, gave their opinion in the affirmative, and thereupon the Lords of the Admiralty issued a warrant for Byng's execution.

Before the date fixed for fulfilment of the sentence desperate efforts were made by the prisoner's nephew, Lord Torrington, and others to avert his fate. In the House of Commons a member who had sat on the

<sup>1</sup> This is somewhat cryptic.

court martial prayed the aid of Parliament that he and his colleagues might be released from their oath of secrecy under the Act, in order to disclose circumstances which might prove the sentence to be improper. King George thereupon respited the execution, to give an opportunity for further investigation. At the same time the King declared his determination to let the sentence be carried into execution unless it should appear that Admiral Byng was unjustly condemned.

With great despatch a Bill was passed through the Commons and sent up to the Lords for the purpose of relieving the members of the court martial from the obligation of their oath of secrecy. On the second reading the judges were ordered to attend the House.

Vice-Admiral Smith, president of the court martial, was called in and sworn at the Bar. He was asked whether anything passed previous to the sentence being pronounced which might show it to be unjust. Similar questions were put to his colleagues.

Such, however, were the answers given to the various questions that the rejection of the Bill was moved and carried.

All hope of escape now was at an end. The unhappy Admiral was ordered for execution on the 15th of March, on board the *Monarque* in Portsmouth harbour.

The Admiral received the dreadful news with undaunted front. "If nothing but my blood will satisfy, let them take it," he said. When told that perhaps

there still was a possibility of pardon, he replied, "What will that signify to me? What satisfaction can I receive from the liberty to crawl a few years longer on the earth with the infamous load of a pardon at my back? I despise life on such terms, and would rather have them take it back."

These were not mere vapouring words. Byng's subsequent conduct showed that he meant what he said. When the fatal morning came a furious March gale was blowing at Spithead, and even ruffling the sheltered waters of the harbour. The *Ramillies*, the ship which Byng had commanded in the Mediterranean, broke her mooring-chain about half an hour before he died, and the sailors, ever superstitious, saw in this a fitting omen of the Admiral's fate.

The shrouds and yards of all the ships in harbour were crowded with seamen. Great numbers of people had come out in boats, and on the jetties crowds had gathered to hear, if not to see. The Admiral himself was to give the signal to the platoon of nine marines, the firing party being drawn up in three lines, with bayonets fixed.

Orders had been given for the men-of-war at Spithead to send their boats with the captains and officers to attend the execution. They reached the harbour with great difficulty on the ebb tide, the wind still blowing hard from W.N.W.

A heap of sawdust had been thrown on the quarter-deck of the *Monarque*, and a cushion placed upon it.

The hour had come. The Admiral crossed the deck with a firm step. When a friend offered to bandage his eyes he declined with a smile, saying, "I thank God I can do it myself; I think I can; I am sure I can."

And he did it.

He wore a light-coloured coat, white waistcoat and stockings, and a large white wig.

Kneeling on the cushion, he gave the arranged signal by dropping a handkerchief. Six of the marines fired; and five of the bullets went home. Byng fell upon his side, and died instantly, without a struggle or a groan.

" 'What is all this, and what devil reigns here?' 'It is an admiral,' they tell him. 'And why kill the admiral?' . . . 'He had to give battle to a French admiral, and he did not go near enough.' 'But the French admiral was as far from him as he was from the French admiral.' 'That is very true, but in this country it is useful to kill an admiral now and then *pour encourager les autres!*' " <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire.

## CHAPTER XII

Court-martial law under the Georges—Debates in Parliament—Part taken by Vernon and other naval officers—General Wolfe's criticism of the failure of the fleet off Minorca—Jingoes of the period—Dearth of able commanders on sea and land—"Old Blakeney"—Walpole on the generals—Lord Loudoun—"Popgun" Hopson—"Hangman" Hawley—Made Governor of Portsmouth—Rise of Wolfe and Howe—Political appointments in the Navy—Trumped-up charge against Admiral Keppel—Popular feeling against Admiral Palliser—His flight from Portsmouth—The London mob in Pall Mall—Charles Fox on the scene—Honours for Keppel—Court resentment against him.

THE Consolidating Act already referred to, which engaged so much attention in connection with the trial of Byng, had been the subject of fierce conflict when the Bill was under discussion in Parliament. Service members, including Admiral Vernon, took a vigorous part in the debates.

The question of the oath of members of a court martial excited special controversy. It was justly urged that these tribunals were dangerous weapons in the hands of a wicked Minister, and would become yet more dangerous if Ministers were enabled to pack



the court to suit their own political purposes. It was argued that the oath of members of the court, which before was ridiculous, was now about to be made quite absurd. Members were not to disclose the voting unless required thereto by lawful authority, and under the proposed amendment of the law they were not to disclose any vote unless required by Act of Parliament. So that neither House of Parliament could inquire into the evidence of a court martial unless the party in power, with a majority at its back, chose to consent to a special Act for that purpose. The substance of the arguments used in this important debate, in which Vernon showed himself a shrewd and strenuous critic, may be found under the names of Claudius Nero, Claudius Marcellus, and others, the borrowed titles given to the speakers in the *London Magazine*.

It is easy to believe that Vernon, bearing in mind those earlier debates, must have watched with keenest interest the unfolding tragedy of the Admiral who paid the death penalty on board the *Monarque*.

One terrible feature of the trial was the long-drawn anguish of delay and uncertainty before the bullets did their work that windy day in March. The trial, which commenced in December, 1756, had lasted thirty-one days, Sundays excepted. The execution itself took place some seven months before the subject of this memoir passed away. There is no record of Vernon's own opinion on the subject of Byng's conduct or his

trial. But other contemporaries, whose judgment must be distinguished from that of the writers of lampoons and political pamphlets, have left their verdicts on record. Before Byng's failure at Port Mahon, Wolfe, writing from Basingstoke (on the march with his regiment to Canterbury), hints at his misgivings: "If things take a bad turn—and by our management I don't know what other to expect—this war may rout the funds and destroy our public credit, root and branch."

From the "Grenville Correspondence" also we get a glimpse of the apprehensions that disturbed the mind of Pitt (Lord Chatham): "I hear, however, from rumour that clouds gather on every side, and distress—infinite distress—seems to hem us in on all quarters. The same weak, infatuated conduct that begat this distress seems determined to increase and multiply it upon our heads. We are helpless and childish as ever. . . . So much for those at the helm! The passengers . . . are in alarm, and think the ship sinking."

After an interval Wolfe comments again on the ominous developments of the situation. Indeed (and particularly at this period) his interest and criticism seem to have been stirred by naval fully as much as by military affairs.

"Are the measures taken for the relief of Minorca, or the proceedings of our Admiral most to be admired? I shall be of your opinion hereafter, that we must have the odds of five to four to

secure our success at sea. I flatter myself that the poor little abandoned garrison of St. Philip's will do courageously at least—wisely and skilfully I do not expect ; and that the troops in the course of the war will do nothing dishonourable, nor betray their country.”

Three weeks later, from Devizes, writing this time to his father, he exclaims :—

“I wish you joy of Admiral Byng's escape and of the safe arrival of our fleet at Gibraltar. General Blakeney has no great obligations to the fleet upon this occasion. They have left him in an ugly scrape, out of which I am persuaded he will only be delivered by a cannon-shot.”

Later he says, “I myself believe that we are a match for the combined fleets of Europe, especially if our generals and admirals were all of the same spirit.”

But that, precisely, is what our generals and admirals were not, and the British people were not misrepresented by Lord Tyrawley, who (when transferred from the governorship of Minorca to that of Gibraltar) wrote to Henry Fox : “That Gibraltar is the strongest town in the world, that one Englishman can beat three Frenchmen, and that London Bridge is one of the seven wonders of the world, are the natural prejudices of English coffee-house politicians.”

The coffee-house politicians of that period were the political ancestors of the Jingoës of the modern music-hall.

Yet again and again we have shown ourselves “the most egregious blunderers in war that ever took the hatchet in hand.”

It certainly looks as if Wolfe, had he been a member of the court martial, would have concurred in the condemnation of Admiral Byng, for this is what he says about him in an earlier letter :—

“ If that Byng had been in haste to retrieve his own honour and the reputation of the British Flag, he has had time and strength to do it. But I fear he is a dog. . . . If Byng has lost one day at Gibraltar, he is the most damnable of traitors.”

It is only right to add that a study of Wolfe's correspondence shows that, at times, he was unduly vehement in his expressions of opinion. So bright and strong was the spirit of his own patriotism, that he found it difficult to think patiently about any officer who failed to maintain the honour of our Flag. But if Byng was a “ dog,” there were other dogs yonder in the Mediterranean. Walpole, writing to Chute, thus alludes to the rumours then current :—

“ By all one learns, Byng, Fowke, and all the officers at Gibraltar, were infatuated ! They figured Port Mahon lost ; and Gibraltar a-going ! a-going ! Lord Effingham, Cornwallis, Lord Robert Bertie, all, all, signed the Council of War, and are in as bad odour as possible. The King says it will be his death, and that he neither eats nor sleeps—all our trust is in the Hanoverians.”

And His Majesty's Ministers, what of them ? We glean some idea from the “ Grenville Correspondence ” :—

“ There is much talk of an expedition ; but the Ministers, I hear, deny there is anything in agitation. . . . Some think the Ministers

mad enough to attempt retaking Minorca at this season ; others suppose it is calculated merely to stop the current of clamour by pretending to do something."

Presently they glorified General Blakeney by way of balancing the degradation of Byng. Yet though the Admiral had done nothing, the General had not done very much. Horace Walpole neatly summed up the position. The King gave Blakeney a red ribbon and an Irish barony. The General arrived at Court in a hackney-coach with a foot-soldier behind it, upon which Walpole remarks, "As he has not only lost his government, but as he was bed-ridden while it was losing, these honours are a little ridiculed ; we have too many governors that will expect titles, if losses are pretensions."

In truth there was a dreadful dearth of great commanders on land and sea. After Marlborough there seemed to be no general of towering strength. Almost without exception, as years went on, the leaders of our troops were intellectual pigmies. Of course there *were* some exceptions—more or less qualified. The English subaltern was inferior to no subaltern, and the English private soldier to no private soldier in Christendom ; but as Macaulay said of the period of which he wrote, "The English officers of higher rank were thought hardly worthy to command such an army." Such was the view of able foreign generals, and it remained the truth in the period to which this chapter more especially relates—the mid-period of the eighteenth century.

H.R.H. the Duke of Cumberland certainly had no claim to greatness. Marshal Saxe, who was a real soldier, once, and perhaps more than once, made some unflattering remarks about the Duke.<sup>1</sup> "Old Blakeney" as Walpole styles him, was no military genius, in spite of the red ribbon and the Irish barony.

When we wanted to turn the French out of Canada the Government must needs pitch on General Braddock—Braddock the blunderer, who thought he had nothing to learn from George Washington or Benjamin Franklin, Braddock who murmured, as he was carried, wounded and dying, from the field, that he would know better another time.

In Lord Loudoun, another officer, there was no fitness to wield the sword. He could not muster sufficient energy to use the pen. They said of him in America, "He is like St. George on the signs—always on horseback, but never rides on." Chatham recalled him because he could get no news of what his lordship was doing. The great Minister naturally in-

<sup>1</sup> Marshal Saxe, a naturalised Frenchman, was the natural son of Augustus II., King of Poland. Walpole said of him significantly, he died "by Venus, not by Mars." When the French King was told of his death he exclaimed, "Alas! I have lost my general, and have only captains left." The General wanted his body to be burned, so that nothing but his glory should remain, but Louis had the body buried in the Lutheran Church of St. Thomas at Strasbourg, and erected a gorgeous monument to his memory. Theoretically Saxe was a Lutheran, and it was said of him, "Il est bien triste de ne pouvoir dire seul *De Profundis* pour un guerrier qui a fait chanter tant de *Te Deum*."



ferred that he was doing nothing, which was the fact. Loudoun never rode on—even when he was reinforced by General Hopson, an officer of whom Walpole wrote to Mann that he was “a commander whom a child might outwit or terrify with a pop-gun.”

General Hawley—“Hangman” Hawley—was to have repelled the French if they had invaded these shores in 1756. Wolfe said of him that no more unfit person could have been selected; “for the troops dread his severity, hate the man, and hold his military knowledge in contempt.” Doubtless it was for his “military knowledge” that he was made Governor of Portsmouth.

The list of incompetents might be continued *ad infinitum* and *ad nauseam*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Albemarles, on whom fortune showered military honours and appointments, were supremely ignorant of the art of war. Arnold Joost Van Keppel came over with William III. He was little more than a diligent copyist of documents. It suited Sunderland to push him forward, and he became Baron Ashford, Viscount Bury, and Earl of Albemarle. His son, William-Anne, the second earl, commanded a division at Culloden, and afterwards became Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Scotland. In 1748 he was appointed Ambassador to the French Court, having held the office of Governor of Virginia and Groom of the Stole. Lord Chesterfield explained his success by describing “his air, his address, his manners, and his graces. He pleased, and by pleasing became a favourite, and becoming a favourite, became all that he has been since. Show me one instance where intrinsic worth and merits, unassisted by exterior accomplishments, have raised a man so high.” Doubtless, like the Duc de Mirepoix, he had “a good leg and could dance.” Madame de Pompadour said, “Milord Albemarle passes his time agreeably here. The King of England, who loves him, I know not why, sends him his lesson all ready, and he comes to repeat it like a schoolboy.”



*Here to the Portraits in the GREAT PICTURE of LORD HOWE'S Victory. Engraving and  
 Exhibiting at Mr. Pines Gallery, 41, Old Bond Street  
 under the direction of  
 His Majesty and the Lords of the Admiralty.*



- No. 1. Lord Howe.  
 2. Sir R. Curtis R.  
 3. Sir A. S. Douglas.  
 4. Sir A. Hammonds son  
 5. Cap. Lock.  
 6. Lt. Holland.  
 7. Major Isaac.  
 8. Cap. Tindal.  
 9. Cap. Neville.

*Queens & Reg.*

HEROES OF "THE GLORIOUS FIRST OF JUNE."

From an old Magazine.

And what of the naval commanders? Shovel lay in Westminster Abbey; Rooke in Canterbury Cathedral; Vernon was old and in retirement. But, happily, after a long, long reign of muddlers and mediocrities, at least a few brave and brilliant men were coming to the rescue of the ancient flag: Wolfe himself in the army; Hawke and Howe at sea. Wolfe and Howe may be bracketed together. Walpole describes the latter as "undaunted as a rock, and as silent: the characteristics of his whole race. He and Wolfe contracted a friendship, like the union of a cannon and gunpowder." Barrow added, "There is meaning in the metaphor: Howe strong in mind, solid in judgment, firm of purpose, is the cannon; the gunpowder is Wolfe, quick in perception, prompt in execution, impetuous in action."

In the undistinguished crowd behind there may have been young officers capable of great achievements; guiltless Cromwells, village Hampdens, who never got a chance. Only a few could force their way to the front or catch the eye of a powerful Minister as Wolfe caught that of Chatham. Court favour, jobbery and political influence were always at work to the detriment of the national service. In the Navy the best men, such as Rooke and Vernon, time and again were the victims of this evil and complex influence. Carpet knights and political pets were given high commands and handsome salaries. When the hour of trial came they failed, and always tried to shift the blame to other

shoulders. Of this there was a striking example some ten or eleven years after Byng was shot. Another court martial then assembled in Portsmouth harbour, to try Admiral Keppel on a charge of cowardice. As with Byng, it was the case of a fight that "went off." When Keppel wanted to renew the engagement, the Rear-Admiral, Sir Hugh Palliser, failed to obey the signals, and the French Fleet got away. Keppel tried to shield Palliser, but Palliser was eager to accuse Keppel. Sir Hugh—"that black man," as Horace Walpole calls him—had much influence at Court, and besides was one of the Lords of the Admiralty. Keppel, on the other hand, belonged to the Opposition. In the House of Commons there was an angry debate. The trial that followed lasted thirty-two days, one day longer than that of Byng. Palliser, as a witness for the prosecution, showed the utmost animus. But enmity was doomed to fail. An answer given by Captain Marshall, of the *Arethusa*, was worth all Palliser's insinuations, and defeated them.

"THE COURT : Captain Marshall, from the day you first saw the French Fleet, to the time you lost sight of them, did you from your own observation and judgment know of any act of the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Keppel, behaving or conducting himself unbecoming a skilful flag officer ?

"MARSHALL : No, as God is my judge."

The court found that the accusation was malicious and ill-founded, declared Keppel to be a judicious, brave, and experienced officer, and fully and honour-

ably acquitted him of the charge that had been trumped up. The result was signalled far and wide. The sailors in harbour, the sailors at Spithead, the populace on shore, roared themselves hoarse with cheering. Every one wanted to shake the Admiral by the hand. But against Palliser—the Judas, the Iago, of the plot—the people turned with deadly fury. To escape from the crowd, who threatened violence, Palliser left the town in a hired post-chaise at five o'clock in the morning. The Portsmouth people relieved their feelings by smashing all the windows of his house<sup>1</sup> in St. Thomas's Street, and pelted the walls with mud.

The London mob seemed disposed to treat him in like manner, and yelled in front of Palliser's town house in Pall Mall. As a matter of precaution he had taken refuge at the Admiralty. Meantime the smashing of the windows and yells of the mob brought the Guards down on the rioters. Charles Fox, the young Duke

<sup>1</sup> The writer's father bought the house some fifty years ago. About forty years afterwards a large portrait was discovered in a shallow cupboard adjoining the butler's pantry. The cupboard had a sliding door, half its width, which was some five feet. The picture had been pushed into the furthest end from the opening. It proved to be a family portrait, and obviously the work of a talented painter. Experts expressed the opinion that it was a Romney. Surmise points to its being a portrait of Sir Hugh Palliser, or of some member of the family, and it seems possible that the Admiral, in his haste to escape, had the picture hidden where it was found a hundred years and more after it was stowed away. The court martial took place in 1779. Romney died in 1802.



of Ancaster, and Lord Derby came reeling out of Almack's to see what sport was on. One of them suggested it would be a pleasant variety to smash the windows of Lord George Germaine (the unpopular Minister for America), and the hint was promptly acted on. Some of the rioters then bethought themselves of the equally objectionable Lord North. His lordship took refuge on the roof of his house, but the Guards dispersed the mob. The Duke of Ancaster was arrested, and had to spend the rest of the night in the watch-house.

Keppel received the Freedom of the City. Palliser had to resign his seat at the Admiralty Board. Nevertheless Keppel was not forgiven at Court, and when he sought re-election for the borough of Windsor, Castle influence was used almost without disguise in the hope that he might be humiliated by a defeat.

Thus under George III., as under George II., the old venom manifested itself in the conduct of imperial affairs. No contemporary of Vernon ever dared to accuse him, as Palliser accused Keppel, of cowardice. Any such slanderer would have been laughed to scorn. But the one case is parallel to the other as an illustration of popular justice withstood by official malignity. These things remain written for our learning; and, even in this twentieth century, those who run may read.

## CHAPTER XIII

Misrepresentation of the Admiral's conduct—He demonstrates the truth by means of pamphlets—His criticism of the press-gang system—Condemns the treatment of British sailors—The old Navigation Acts—Results of Free Trade—Old-age pensions for seamen—Mutinies in the fleet—Smugglers of the period—Churchwardens as naval auxiliaries—"A Specimen of Naked Truth"—Resentment of the Admiralty—Summoned to attend before the Board—Unfair removal of his name from list of flag officers—Historical criticism and critics—His popularity undiminished—Active in the House of Commons—Receives Freedom of the City of Edinburgh—Death of Admiral Vernon—Monument placed by his nephew, Lord Orwell, in Westminster Abbey.

THE sting of misrepresentation and injustice was destined to touch Admiral Vernon even in his well-earned retirement. Finding that it was supposed that he had been *removed* from his command for showing a want of energy against the French, he set himself to prepare a rebuttal of this scandalous and unfounded imputation. This he did by means of certain pamphlets. In the first of these, entitled "Some Seasonable Advice from an Honest Sailor," he reproduced all the

letters he had written to the Admiralty between the months of August and December, 1745. As showing his enlightenment as a naval reformer, and his courage in putting his views—however unwelcome—before the supreme authority, a few of these outspoken letters may be summarised. In a letter dated October 10, 1745, he emphatically condemned the practice of impressing seamen, a system which Vernon (as the result of long experience) regarded as impolitic and injurious to the service. But he obeyed his orders, which were to impress every seaman he could lay his hands on. The long-boats and cutters of his squadron were constantly employed in this odious task. But it was against his better judgment, and he did not hesitate to say so, in spite of official disfavour and discouragement. He pointed out that France was ahead of England in showing consideration for the health of her sailors and care of them when sick. He held it to be scandalous that British seamen, many of whom had served for years in the East or West Indies, and were suffering from scorbutic diseases, should be forcibly seized and compelled to serve again, without being allowed time to recover their health. It was barbarous to them and injurious to the other members of the ship's company. Vernon advocated a humane system of voluntary service, and argued with irresistible logic that—

“Those who are to be depended on for the defence of our present Royal Family, our religion, and liberties, should not be

the only persons in this country that appear to have no liberty at all.”<sup>1</sup>

We Englishmen refuse even to think of military conscription, but our grandfathers had to submit to naval conscription enforced through the brutal agency of the press-gang. England, the nursery of liberty, whose flag was supposed to be the flag of the free—endured even in the earlier years of the nineteenth century this most ruthless form of tyranny. In our seaport towns the press-gangs scoured the streets at night and laid violent hands on husbands, sons, fathers, brothers. Merchant seamen, whose gait, garb, or speech betrayed them, of course were the special prey of the Government. Many and many a man just returned from a long voyage in distant seas was seized when on the point of reaching his home port, hurried on board a warship, and compelled to submit to the naval discipline of the period perhaps for several years. In the streets of our ports men went in fear and trembling after dark. Sailors and workmen going home at night would frequently disguise themselves as women to escape being carried off to sea. Of course the most convenient method of manning the fleet was to take the seamen out of merchant-ships. Thus came about what Admiral Vernon stigmatised as a fatal consequence of the unfair and shortsighted policy, which—

<sup>1</sup> Only such extracts are given here and on other pages as seem requisite to show the Admiral's views. The text of his letters to the Admiralty will be found in the Appendix.

“Has driven our merchants to man their ships homeward bound with foreign seamen, by which even the press is disappointed.”

But, at any rate in those days, the expediency of keeping our own trade in British bottoms was recognised, for there were in force the Navigation Acts, a series of enactments originated in the reign of Richard II., and taking explicit form in 1651, as a practical check on the maritime rivalry of the Dutch. These Acts, which were designed to give special protection to imports and exports in British vessels, have a very practical as well as historical bearing on the fiscal problems of the present day. The Free Trade movement, which reached its climax in 1849, led to the repeal of the Navigation Acts. With them went those valuable provisions which required British ships to carry a number of apprentices in proportion to their tonnage—a system which would afford an admirable method of making good use of our modern hooligans. The Merchant Shipping Act, 1854, became the basis of law governing the mercantile marine, and the provisions of that statute re-enacted in the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, embody the laws of the sea for British vessels at the present time.

The old system of impressing seamen finds a curious illustration in the *Naval Chronicle* of September 23, 1803, which records :—

“Last evening at eight o’clock a very hot press took place at Portsmouth, Portsea, and Gosport, in the harbour and most

places in the neighbourhood. No protestations were listened to, and a vast number of persons of various descriptions were sent on board the different ships in this port."

Most of them, however, were useless for the purpose of seamanship, and were sent ashore again, but, of course, not one of them had any remedy for his seizure and temporary imprisonment.

In the same year, Captain Bowen, an enterprising and resourceful officer who must have had something of the sea-lawyer in his composition, resorted to a smart device at Gosport. Pretending that there was a riot at Fort Monckton, he hurried thither with a company of marines, followed by hundreds of people across Haslar Bridge. He then placed some of his men at the entrance to the bridge and "impressed" all the eligible in the disappointed crowd as presently it trooped back again.

This, be it remembered, was in the days of Nelson, who in 1803 hoisted his flag on the *Victory*.

In the matter of the press-gang Admiral Vernon practically was a hundred years in advance of his age. Such men get scant justice from their own generation, but they should at least receive it at the hands of an enlightened posterity.

In November, 1745, the Admiral wrote :—

"It will be necessary to reconcile the affections of the seamen to the public service by a more humane treatment. . . . I have long lamented their situation, and made some faint attempts towards relieving it."



He dwelt upon the vital need for England to maintain a superiority at sea—

“Which will be always in danger of being lost, when we lose the affection of our seamen.”

Here it may be mentioned that Admiral Vernon was a member of the House of Commons which passed in 1746 a measure which should have proved a boon of incalculable value to merchant seamen. The Act in question was designed to insure relief for those who were disabled, and assistance for the widows and children of sailors who lost their lives at sea. In a word, it created a system of old-age pensions with insurance benefits for a class that specially stood in need of such provision. The enactment was supplemented by various statutes ranging from 37 Geo. III., c. 73, to 7 and 8 Vict., c. 121. By these Acts masters, mates, and seamen were required to contribute to a “merchant seamen’s fund.” But the scheme, meritorious in itself, was not properly worked, and in 1851 an Act was passed to close the fund. Contributions ceased to be compulsory, and no fresh voluntary contributions were admitted. As a necessary consequence the number of pensioners annually decreased. In 1891 all that was left of the fund was £3,095. Probably at the present time there is nothing left at all. No wonder that the hardships of a merchant seaman’s life and the prospects of a penniless old age discourage our overflowing population from going to

sea, and result in crowding our merchant-ships with foreign sailors, to the no small danger of the realm. The Admiral in his day pleaded earnestly for what he described as the cause of God and the King, and concluded another letter thus :—

“I hope their lordships will be so good as to excuse, at least, the overflowing of my zeal for both.”

That, however, precisely was what their lordships were far too spiteful, or too dense, to do. They maintained a policy of mischievous inactivity. The compassion for the multitude, which moved Admiral Vernon, found no response at headquarters. “My Lords” would do nothing for the men on whose courage and loyalty the welfare of the kingdom so largely depended. Nor did their official successors display a more humane and prudent spirit. It is not too much to say that if heed had then been paid to the appeal of Admiral Vernon, the British Navy might have been spared those alarming mutinies by means of which, after another fifty years of patient endurance, the seamen of our fleets at last asserted their wrongs and secured a remedy. In that long span of years how many deaths and what direful misery befell our seamen! Yet these were the men whom England expected to fight, and who did fight gallantly for King and country. The marvel is not that there were mutinies in the end, but rather that the men did not mutiny long before. The mutiny at Spithead in 1797

was brought about by genuine grievances, which the authorities had persistently ignored. The pay of an able seaman then was precisely what it had been in the days of James II., although the price of the necessities of life was much higher. Nor did they even get full value for their money. To the ordinary citizen the pound weight represented sixteen ounces as it does to-day, but to the handyman of that period it stood for only fourteen ounces, so that he was put off with light weight even in the provisions served out to him, without reckoning further shrinkage through the customary peculation of the ship's purser.

Besides these injustices there existed the oppressor's wrong in the matter of shore-leave, discipline, and punishment. Even when, in 1797, the seamen submitted their case, by means of a temperate petition, to the authorities, Lord Bridport and Sir Peter Parker, the Port Admiral at Portsmouth, missed the last opportunity to remedy matters, and merely sent a fatuous, do-nothing report to headquarters. Yet the men were right when they sought—

“To convince the nation at large that they knew when to cease to ask as well as when to begin, and that they asked nothing but what was moderate and might be granted without detriment to the nation or injury to the service.”

What they did ask had to be granted, and in addition a full pardon under the King's sign-manual, to the mutineers. The mutiny at the Nore in the same year

was marked by more objectionable features, owing to the evil influence of the ringleader, one Parker, a man of remarkable character and unbounded impudence. The crew of the *Sandwich* ultimately gave him up to the authorities, and he was promptly tried, found guilty, and hanged at the yard-arm.

About five years later there was a mutiny on the *Temeraire*. Thirteen men were sentenced to death, and one to receive the terrible punishment of two hundred lashes round the fleet. Taylor, one of those capitally convicted, told the ship's company :—

“Sailors never did stick to each other on such an occasion. Those who attempt to violate the laws of the land or naval discipline must inevitably expect to meet with the same disgraceful end I am going to suffer. I acknowledge the justness of my sentence, and forgive all parties concerned against me. I have made my peace with God, and am prepared to die.”

Another practical subject to which Vernon directed the notice of the Admiralty was the infamous lengths to which smuggling was carried in Dover, Deal, Ramsgate and Folkestone, and other coast towns. It was conjectured that the cutters always plying between Folkestone and Boulogne ran contraband to the value of a thousand pounds a week. Smuggled goods were landed nightly with complete impunity under the guns of Dover Castle, and carried off under the escort of bands of horsemen. Through the influence of this clandestine trade honest fishermen became lazy, treacherous, and drunken loafers, ready to play

the spy, when occasion offered, as it constantly did, or to turn a dishonest penny by selling information to the enemy. It was, said Vernon, a national reproach that wholesale smuggling should be allowed practical encouragement and impunity.

One more weighty matter on which the Admiral dwelt was the subject of privateering. Privateers, it was said, had brought wealth to the country ; but they had developed a profligate spirit, and in the general way sought their own and not the public advantage. Warships, if allowed a greater latitude than was usually given to their commanders, could have done better than any privateers. Glancing back to the reign of Queen Anne, "when we had well-conducted western squadrons, under the direction of experienced admirals, with a proper latitude in their orders," it was to be seen, as Vernon contended, that our trade then was well protected and the enemy's privateers suppressed.

The second of the Admiral's pamphlets set forth various letters and reports, which made it clear to demonstration that he had exercised the greatest and most successful vigilance in defeating the designs of the enemy. Apart from the main purpose of the correspondence, these documents reveal sundry quaint and interesting passages. Thus, in order that there might be speedy information of the enemy's movements, the Admiral had taken measures to secure the co-operation of the churchwardens of various seaside parishes. The Church thus became in a double sense

the Church Militant here on earth—flags were to be hoisted on the steeples by day, and fires in iron pots, as a signal, by night, as well as on the coast castles, thus forming a chain from Beachy Head to the South Foreland. For this purpose Dover Castle, Folkestone Parish Church, Sandgate Castle, Dymchurch, Rye Church, Hastings Church, and others, were carefully scheduled.

Another of Vernon's reports mentions :—

“That on the 17th the Pretender's youngest son came into Calais; that on the 18th, when he went out of the town, all the troops were drawn out and they saluted him, *Vive le Roy*, he being accompanied by the Governor and gentry of the town, and a great number of officers.”

The Admiral adds that his informant—

“did not see the young man himself, or take any notice of him, but has heard, from those who did, that he squinted.”

The implication of the malicious report concerning Vernon's removal from his command is conclusively disposed of by his letters, in which he plainly told the Admiralty (after their interference with his proper discretion in the matter of the appointment of a gunner, and other examples of fault-finding) that he should be pleased to resign.

“If their lordships,” he wrote, “think they have a properer officer to serve His Majesty in this station, God forbid I should be any obstacle to their sending him down to be employed here.”



Again, he says :—

“I cannot conceive any just grounds I have given for my being treated in such a style in your letters, on facts that you must, at least, have been grossly misinformed on.”

To Vice-Admiral Martin, Vernon wrote :—

“You know, sir, my orders are to deliver this command up to you, which I am moving up to the Downs for, with this pleasing satisfaction, that I have from these accounts already put such a check to the enemy’s intended descent, that it is to me very doubtful if they will venture to hazard it now.”

The following extracts will sufficiently show the nature of another of the “pamphlets,” and for further information the reader is referred to the Appendix :—

## SECOND PAMPHLET.

“A SPECIMEN OF NAKED TRUTH FROM A BRITISH SAILOR :  
LONDON, 1746.”

[*Copy.*]

“*December 25, 1745.*

“SIR,—My letters being made up, signed, directed, and sealed, for having gone by yesterday’s post, if there had been any opportunity of weather for it ; I shall begin this with informing their Lordships that yesterday evening, and till near midnight, we had a very hard gale of wind from the S.W. to the S.S.W., that obliged us to make our ships as snug as we could for riding it out, and thought it prudent even to get our topsail yards down into the top : and I thank God we all rode it out without any damage ; and the weather moderating this morning, I got yards and topmasts up by daylight, and am now unmooring, and shall weigh with my division as soon as the ebb-tide begins to favour us for it. . . .

“I could not but be under some surprise what could be meant

by the expression in your letter, of 'having kept all my great ships in the Downs, and employed only my frigates for gaining intelligence while the enemies' ships have passed backwards and forwards, between Ostend, Dunkirk, and Calais at their leisure, without hindrance or molestation.' I cannot conceive where you must have picked up such intelligence, so contrary to what is the fact, that my former letters have related to you to inform their Lordships of, viz.—That amongst other frigates employed on such services were the *Eagle*, *York*, and *Carlisle*, that have been some time since at my recommendation, and in good part by my influence, engaged into the Crown's service; and are and have been ever since the 11th December acting under my orders only; though your letter, Sir, mentions them as Privateers, as if they were acting under their own orders; and within that time, I must repeat it now, five galliot hoys have been taken coming from Havre de Grace to Boulogne and sent into Dover; and of those coming from Dunkirk going for Calais a dogger laden with five pieces of cannon, several field carriages, one hundred barrels of gunpowder and other military stores, have been set fire to, and all seen to blow up in the air by Captain Gregory, who was with them in a cutter on that service; two of their shallop fishing boats sunk, twelve others of them chased on shore, and three with cannon and military stores brought into Dover, and a Calais dogger Privateer, of six guns and fifty men taken, thirty-one of which I have on board the *Princess Louisa*, and have desired Vice-Admiral Martin to give himself the trouble of examining some of them, to try if better intelligence cannot be procured from them, than what Captain Hill has been able to gather from them, which you had inclosed in my yesterday's letter, as you have had of the twelve sail of ships chased from within two leagues of Calais back into Dunkirk Road, by the *Saphire* and *Folkstone*, one of which they chased on shore upon the sands, and the Pilot would not venture so near as the Captain took upon himself to do.

"Surely, these are instances of the enemy having been watched much closer than could have been expected in this winter season. And what are the large ships I have kept in the Downs? The *Norwich* and *Ruby*, two 50-gun ships; for till the arrival of the *Monmouth* and *Falkland*, I have had no others.

I thank God, by a prudent conduct, the enemy have been prevented from sailing either from Dunkirk or Ostend for this month past, and none of His Majesty's ships have been shipwrecked by any imprudent disposition of them, and that I think I have acted prudently and successfully in His Majesty's service, though in many of your letters I have been treated as if I had done neither ; and to look no farther back, I think I am treated so in this letter of yours of the 23rd, which I desire the favour of their Lordships to call for the copy of, and have read to them ; as I cannot conceive any just grounds I have given for my being treated in such a style in your letters, on facts that you must at least have been grossly misinformed in. . . .

"I shall always serve my Royal Master with a sincere zeal for his service, and with the utmost diligence, resolution, and capacity that I am capable of, to the best of my judgment ; and while my services are approved of, I shall always continue them with pleasure ; but if I am judged not to have a capacity for it, as by the style of the Secretary's letters seems to be insinuated, sure it is the fruits of a sincere zeal to say, that if you have thought of any one you judge more proper for it, all that I desire is, that His Majesty may be most effectually served, and I shall with pleasure resign any command I have to him.

"Captain Knowles has brought another letter of yours of the 23rd, and that he is come to serve with me as a Volunteer, and as I well know Captain Knowles' zeal and activity for His Majesty's service, his coming here gives me a particular pleasure, as I shall be glad to advise with him for His Majesty's service, and at all times ready to furnish him with any opportunities that he can suggest to me, for our Royal Master's service, and defeating the enemy's intentions for invading His Majesty's dominions ; which, from being discovered by my cruisers, that the enemy were drawing their transports from the westward to Boulogne, and from the eastward from Ostend and Dunkirk to Calais ; I am fully persuaded the enemy's intentions in those motions have been to attempt an invasion upon the opposite shore of Kent, from the ports of Boulogne and Calais, and which I have been endeavouring to move for preventing these three days successively ; am now unmoored for, and nothing but the weather shall prevent me. And their Lordships will see by my

orders to Vice-Admiral Martin (I have sent you enclosed the copy of) I have strengthened his command with all the force their Lordships have ordered here from Commodore Smith, and have left with him the copy of his orders you have sent me enclosed, and desired he will dispose all those put under his command, immediately on the services he judges most expedient for watching the enemy's motions from Ostend and Dunkirk. And as to the four ships lately arrived from Cape Breton, which, by their Lordships' orders of the 23rd, I am to take under my command, those I hope to meet withal in their passage here, and shall incorporate into my division upon my meeting with them, or detach a part of them to join Vice-Admiral Martin as subsequent intelligence shall manifest to me may be most for our Royal Master's service, and defence of his dominions from the threatened invasion.

"We had some appearance for moderate weather this morning, but the wind is backed to the southward, and a southern swell comes round the Foreland, and it gathers dirty and greasy to windward, that I am doubtful whether I shall be able to get out with it, but I shall not fail to attempt it, if there be any appearance of its being practicable; and the Captains of the *Saphire*, *Folkstone*, *Badger*, and *Hornet*, with the Dover Custom-house cutter, Captain Stringer, have all my orders for proceeding in the execution of their former orders, for the inspecting their proceedings at Calais and Boulogne, and nothing either has or shall be omitted for His Majesty's service, that I can think of, or any one can suggest to me to be most expedient for it. And you have always had copies of the orders I have issued for that purpose sent for their Lordships' approbation. You have enclosed the list of the Custom-house cutters that have appeared, six of which I keep to act under my orders, and the other three to remain under Vice-Admiral Martin's.

"I am, Sir, &c."

TO JOHN MORRIS, ESQ., AT DEAL CASTLE.

"SIR,—As it would be for His Majesty's service to have a speedy communication of intelligence, either by night or by day, of the enemies' appearance of any embarkations, for attempting

to invade His Majesty's dominions, I desire you will write letters to the respective churchwardens of the parishes, &c., mentioned in the margin, to hoist a flag upon the church steeple as a signal for it by day, and keep a fire light in an iron pot at the same place as a signal by night, to be repeated from the steeples of the respective churches, for communicating the intelligence from Beachy Head to the South Foreland.

“I am Sir, &c.”

TO VICE-ADMIRAL MARTIN.

“January 1, 1746.

“SIR,—I have just now received yours of the 31st, by Captain Scott, of the *Badger*, with the enclosed from Holland, whose intelligence perfectly agrees with what I found to be true, the enemies having been in motion from Dunkirk to Calais; the twelve sail of ships having been drove back into Dunkirk Road by the *Saphire* and *Folkstone*, and several of the embarkations having been some burnt, sunk, and taken by my cruisers, the *Carlisle* and *York* frigates; and you know the examination of those taken in the *Duchess de Penthièvre* agrees with the Dutch account.

“Captain Owen had looked into Boulogne this morning before Captain Knowles did, and at the same time as he did, and he makes the enemy's embarkations to be above 150 sail, and Captain Pigram, of the *Rye* cutter, agrees with him in his report, though Captain Knowles says he could see but sixty: but I am inclined to think Captain Owen much the best acquainted with the harbour.

“You know, Sir, my orders are to deliver this command up to you, which I am moving up to the Downs for, with this pleasing satisfaction, that I have from these accounts already put such a check to the enemy's intended descent, that it is to me very doubtful if they will venture to hazard it now. I shall, however, continue anchored here till next windward tide, and pray open all my public letters as well as your own, to see whether I can continue to act, or be pleased to take the measures you judge proper. I have now Captains Owen and Bazely over at Boulogne, having detached them away for a fresh inspection, and before I



weighed myself from Dungeness. I will not come into the Downs till the latter end of the evening's flood, for being at hand to receive their report and act conformably to it, and I hope by that time to hear from you again, and shall be plying under sail off Dover.

"I am, Sir, &c.

"January 1st, at three in the Morning."

#### TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

"SIR,—Upon the first of yesterday's flood I weighed with the squadron from the westward of Dungeness, as I informed you I intended to do, having just before given out my orders to Captains Bazely and Owen, in the *Eagle* and *Carlisle* frigates under their command, jointly to make sail over for Boulogne for taking a fresh inspection of the enemy's situation and motions at the port of Boulogne, under the particular orders I send you inclosed a copy of. And in my way plying up Channel, I was joined by the *Folkstone* and *Triton*, and *Hornet* sloop, and upon the tide being spent, I anchored with my squadron between Dover and Folkstone last night, and about eleven at night the *York* joined me from the Downs, and at half an hour past one in the morning Captain Scott, of the *Badger*, came on board to me with a letter from Vice-Admiral Martin, and two letters inclosed from Holland. And though the Vice-Admiral has, as he says, sent you copies of them, yet as the advice was sent to me, I choose to do the same.

"It could not but give me great pleasure to find the gentleman's letter from Holland entirely confirms the intelligence I have given their Lordships, and to find that he thinks with me likewise, that my diligent exertion of my duty has even been said there to have frustrated their intentions of invading this part of the kingdom this last full moon, of which nothing could give me greater pleasure than the having rendered such effectual service to His Majesty and my country, though I have been treated in that contemptuous manner in your letters.

"I have given Captain H—— the orders you have inclosed a copy of, for his weighing with the first flood for making a fresh inspection at Calais this evening or to-morrow morning. As soon as the windward tide makes, I shall weigh with the squadron, and



keep plying and exercising my ships in line of battle, and for being ready at hand on any advice of the enemy's motions ; till I have but barely time for anchoring in the Downs before it is night, when I shall obey their Lordships' commands, consign the command of the fleet to Vice-Admiral Martin, then strike my flag, and go on shore, pursuant to their Lordships' orders.

"I am, Sir, &c.,

"E. VERNON.

"January 1st."

The publication of this documentary evidence, to which Vernon was driven as an act of self-defence, so enraged the Admiralty, that the Secretary was ordered to write to the Admiral to know whether he was concerned in the production of these "anonymous pamphlets," and on the 10th of April, when the Admiral was coming from the House of Commons, a messenger met him with a verbal request that he would attend before the Admiralty Board that evening at seven o'clock.

Vernon attended at the time mentioned, and after being kept waiting for a considerable time, was received by the Commissioners. The Duke of Bedford, as First Lord, then addressed the Admiral, asserting that—

"They were the Admiralty Board, that in them was vested the full power of the Lord High Admiral, and that he as First Commissioner was head of that Board, &c., &c."

His Grace then produced the last pamphlet and demanded an answer, yes or no, whether Admiral Vernon was the author or publisher.

The Admiral answered this peremptory address by acknowledging the powers of the Board, and proceeded to say :—

“That for all questions that should be asked relative to his duty or experience as an officer he should answer to the best of his judgment ; but as to the question now asked, as he looked upon it to be of a private nature, that he apprehended they had no right to ask him that question.” He claimed “the common privilege that was due to every British subject,” and added that, “if his continuing an officer in the service was an eyesore to any one, that he was now grown to be an old man and had reason to be tired with being treated in so contemptuous a manner.”

The Duke of Bedford, as spokesman of the Board, then said that if he would give them no other answer he might withdraw, and “they knew what they had to do.”

The next day the Admiral received a letter informing him that on the report, in relation to the pamphlets, which the Duke had laid before the King, His Majesty had been pleased to direct their lordships to strike the Admiral’s name out of the list of flag officers.

The comment of Mr. W. F. Vernon in his “Memorial,” printed for private circulation in 1861, is as follows :—

“There could be no excuse for this tyrannical proceeding ; and if Admiral Vernon had not in his place in Parliament constantly exposed the abuses then existing in the Navy, and by his manly and straightforward course in the House of Commons made himself obnoxious to the Government of the day, such an act of despotic malevolence would probably never have been thought of.”

Here, too, may be mentioned that other family tribute written in stone in Westminster Abbey. The monument in question was erected by the Admiral's nephew, Lord Orwell, afterwards Earl of Shipbroke.

The inscription is as follows :—

Sacred to the Memory  
of

EDWARD VERNON,  
Admiral of the White Squadron  
of the British Fleet.

He was the second son of James Vernon,  
who was Secretary of State to King William III.,  
and whose ability and integrity  
were equally conspicuous.

In his youth he served under Admirals Shovel and Rooke ;

By their example he learnt to Conquer.

By his own merit he rose to Command.

In the War with Spain, in MDCCXXXIX

He took the Fort of Porto-Bello

with Six Ships,

A force which was thought unequal to the attempt.

For this he received

The Thanks of both Houses of Parliament.

He subdued Chagrè ; and at Carthage

Conquered as far as naval force could carry victory.

After these services he retired,

Without place or title,

From the excesses of Publick,

To the enjoyment of Private,

Virtue.

The testimony of a good Conscience was his Reward,

The love and esteem of all good men  
His Glory.

In battle, tho' he was calm, he was active ;  
and tho' intrepid, Prudent ;  
Successful, tho' not Ostentatious ;  
ascribing the Glory  
to God.

In the Senate he was disinterested, vigilant and steady.  
On the xxx day of October, MDCCLVII,  
He died as he had lived,  
The friend of Man, the lover of his Country,  
The father of the Poor,  
aged LXXIII.

---

As a memorial of his own  
Gratitude, and of the Virtue  
of his Benefactor, this Monument  
was erected by his nephew,  
Lord Orwell, in  
the Year  
1773.

The theory, very frequently contradicted in practice, that blood is thicker than water, naturally leads many persons to discount praises that are bestowed by the descendants of a dead man. But in the case of Admiral Vernon the testimony of a contemporary writer who had made a profound and critical study of the British Navy and of British commanders remains on record in the pages of Mr. John Entick's "Naval History," published in 1757. The following is a transcript of the title page:—

A New  
Naval History  
or  
Compleat View of the British Marine  
in which  
The Royal Navy and the Merchant's Service  
are traced through  
All their Periods and different Branches :  
with  
The Lives of the Admirals and Navigators,  
Who have Honour'd this Nation and Distinguished  
Themselves  
By their  
Conduct, Courage, Victories and Discoveries.  
Including  
The most considerable Naval Expeditions,  
and Sea-fights :  
our Right to  
The Dominion of the Sea and the Dignity of the British Flag  
The  
Laws and Regulations  
for  
The Government and Oeconomy of His Majesty's Navy ;  
and  
The Business and Management of the Several Royal Yards  
and Docks in this Kingdom.  
To which are added  
Our Right and Title to the British Colonies in N.-America  
and  
An Abstract of the Laws now in Force for regulating our  
Trade and Commerce.

---

Illustrated with Copper Plates.

---

By JOHN ENTICK, M.A.

---

LONDON :

Printed for R. Manby, near Ludgate-Hill ; W. Reeve, near Serjeant's Inn, in Fleet-street ; W. Bizet, in St. Clement's Church-yard ; P. Davey and B. Law, in Ave-Mary-Lane ; and J. Scott, in Pater-noster-row. M.DCC.LVII.

This remarkable book is dedicated to Admiral Vernon in these glowing terms :—

To the Honourable

EDWARD VERNON, ESQ.

Admiral of the “White”

Elder-Brother of the Trinity-House and Member  
of Parliament for Ipswich

HONOURED SIR,

In paying this Tribute to your illustrious Actions, I have this Advantage, above other Writers, that I am supported by the unanimous Voice of all grateful Britons, who have rejoiced at your Conduct and Courage, bewail the national Loss of so brave and successful a Commander, and teach their Children to revere your Memory.

The Subject of this History, and the Lustre which the Expeditions and other Services, under your Command, have added to the Marine of Great Britain, make it my Duty, as well as Inclination, to prefix the Name of so Great an Admiral, who carried the Glory of the British Flag to a Height, not equalled by any Atchievements of the Ancients, and which has been declining in its Dignity from the Time, Misrepresentation or Envy deprived Great-Britain of your Service.

To repeat the Conquest of Porto-Bello with Six Ships only, and the entire Suppression of the Piracies of the Spanish Guarda Costas, after the inactive and inglorious Expeditions of Hosier and others ; to celebrate your extensive Schemes formed, and which, had they been effectually supported by those in Power, would have reduced the Island of Cuba, put Britain in Possession of the Havanna, or key of the West Indies, and driven the French and Spanish out of those Seas, or made them Tributaries to the British Monarch ; and to recollect how much Jamaica, and her neighbouring Islands, and even England herself, are indebted to your Watchfulness, Diligence, Activity, and Superiority of Judgment, in preserving them from the Power and Policy of France ; is a most agreeable Entertainment for



every Well-wisher to the British Diadem ; but these are more largely commemorated in the following Naval History, than could possibly be collected within the Compass of this Address.

We admire those Services, which reduced the Pride of Spain ; recovered a Free Trade, and curbed the Ambition of France ; But what might we not expect from your Activity, Knowledge, or Resolution, had you not been obstructed by the Pride, Ignorance, and Hatred of those, with whom you was connected in Council abroad ; and discharged by the Interest of such, as were jealous of your superior Abilities, at home.

It was you, Sir, that the Lords of the Admiralty in the Year 1745, under the greatest Apprehensions of an Invasion, caressed, and intreated to accept of a Command to counter-act the French Embarkation at Dunkirk : Then they declared it to be their Inclination to see you at the Head of the whole Fleet of the Kingdom : It was your Conduct and Judgment that intimidated the Enemy, and totally defeated their Resolutions to make a Descent on England ; though you had no more than four Ships of the Line, six from 50 to 20 Guns, and nineteen Sloops, Privateers, and Tenders. Yet how were these eminent Services rewarded ? Your Honour was hunted out of the Command by the operative Hand of some malicious and industrious Agent : But not till you had the pleasing Satisfaction of seeing a whole nation pay a due Respect to that Merit, which was contemptuously treated by those, from whom the greatest Regard was naturally to be expected.

Permit me therefore, honoured Sir, to present this History of the British Marine for your Approbation and Acceptance, in the Name of those Britons, who are not only Sensible of the Value of the Services you have done for your King and Country, but also of the loss they now sustain by your Retirement : And, wishing you the Enjoyment, which every great and noble Mind has in being conscious of having lived and laboured for the public Good, I, with the greatest Pleasure and Respect, inscribe this Work to your Memory, and beg leave to profess myself to be,

Honoured Sir,

Your most obedient,

Humble Servant,

JOHN ENTICK.

How comes it that of two contemporary writers one, Tobias Smollett, should be so disparaging in his allusions to the Admiral, while the other, John Entick, who evidently possessed far better qualifications as a judge of naval character and naval exploits, had nothing but admiration and eulogy for the same individual?

The answer to this question has been suggested from one point of view in an earlier chapter. The views of Smollett the historian were coloured by the trying personal experiences of Smollett the surgeon's mate. Those experiences, as already mentioned, were used for the purposes of fiction in "*Roderick Random*." The author being one and the same individual, had to preserve some show of consistency. If the Admiral were to be the subject of sneers in the novel, he could not be made the subject of praise in the history. Was it not Fielding, the novelist, who said that the only difference between the historian and himself was, that with the historian everything was false but the dates and names, while with himself everything was true but the dates and names? Thackeray seems to have held a similar opinion—and probably sometimes it led him astray: "I take a volume of Dr. Smollett . . . and say the fiction carries a greater amount of truth in solution than the volume that purports to be all true." If Mr. Thackeray thought Smollett's solution in "*Roderick Random*" was veracious in regard to Admiral Vernon's conduct at Carthage, he certainly

was very much misled, and, in the circumstances stated, whether he read the history or the novel the result would have been the same.

But in connection with Entick and his history of the Navy more light is to be obtained for the illumination of Smollett's prejudices. Entick's great work must have taken many years to write, and in the literary world the progress of the undertaking would have been well known. What is more, Smollett and Entick were well known to each other. They must have been; for they were rival editors. Entick (sometimes spelt Entinck) was the editor of the *Monitor*. This journal was not a newspaper in the sense of a paper that supplies news. It was a six-paged folio coming out every Saturday, and being very much in the nature of an infant *Saturday Review*. Every number contained a forcible political review. It was started when Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle, separately or jointly, were at the helm, after 1754, and was specially designed to check the party schemers then at Court. In our modern phraseology, the *Monitor* was "financed" by Richard Beckford, a London Alderman and Member of Parliament for Bristol (a younger brother of the famous William Beckford, thrice Lord Mayor of London).

The programme of the *Monitor* was highly meritorious, viz. :—

"To commend good men and good measures and to censure bad ones, without respect of persons, and to awaken the spirit of liberty

and loyalty for which the British nation was anciently distinguished, but which was in a manner lulled asleep by that golden opiate which weak and wicked Ministers for many years had too successfully tendered to persons of all ranks as a necessary engine of government, though, in truth, nothing less than a libel upon their own measures, which could not be justified upon principles or wisdom and integrity."

There was more to the same effect, and in the first number Entick boldly exclaimed: "Let us endeavour to restore the integrity of government, and root up corruptness, the principal source from which all our domestic evils have sprung."

And now Smollett re-enters. The *Monitor* had run its course for a couple of years, when Lord Bute, who had forced himself into a Secretaryship of State, be-thought him of setting up another journal to give the *Monitor* tit for tat. Bute sought counsel with Bubb Dodington and others, and the result took form in a new weekly entitled the *Briton*, with Tobias Smollett in the editorial chair. This, writes Mr. Fox Bourne, in his "English Newspapers," was "an unwise choice; for Smollett, skilful novelist though he was, already had proved in the *Critical Review* that he could neither write smartly on matters of fact nor substitute fiction for fact in such a way as to save himself from fine or imprisonment for his slanders. He was a hard-working Tory hack, however, and, as he was often reminded by his enemies, even if he did not remind his employers, a Scotchman with special claims on the Scotchman then in power. He was proficient also in the vocabulary of vituperation."

Smollett, as editor, deemed it essential to begin by attacking Entick as "an author conscious of his own unimportance and incapacity." In short, Potts, of the *Eatanswill Gazette*, could hardly have been more vituperative than Smollett, the Tory hack, in hope of reward from the much-detested Scotch marquis.

Entick, of course, retorted, writing in scornful terms of a "paper whose existence depends on forced interpretations, ingenious miscalculations, and insidious provocations." Mr. Fox Bourne adds that the public seems to have shared Entick's contempt for the *Briton* and its editor. The circulation of the *Briton* certainly was insignificant, and its only importance is derived from the fact that it brought John Wilkes into the field. With the great demagogue and the "*North*" *Briton*, however, this memoir has nothing to do. The point is that Smollett and Entick were in opposite camps; and any snub or hardship that the editor of the *Briton* may have had to endure under Vernon on the Spanish main must have produced increased resentment and bitterness when it was found that this same Entick venerated the Admiral, and was about to dedicate to him in terms of warmest admiration the great historical work on which he was engaged.

That Smollett was not only vituperative but vindictive can be clearly proved by other circumstances in his career. In many respects he was a disappointed and embittered man. Smollett attempted many things besides novel-writing—his great success—and failed



in all. At Bath he set up as a physician, and tried his pen to magnetise patients, by "An Essay on the External Use of Water," with special reference to the mineral springs in the city of Bladud. But the Doctor's "*Plan for rendering them more safe, agreeable, and efficacious*" did not produce the desired effect in the form of fees. His editor and biographer, Dr. Anderson, admits it when he says, "The performance advanced his reputation as a man of science and taste, but failed to conduct the physician to professional eminence and wealth." Smollett then threw over his profession, just as he had thrown up the career of surgeon's mate at sea, turned his back on Bath and moved to Chelsea, where he earned a precarious living as a bookseller's hack.

Meanwhile he had tried play-writing, and soon fell foul of the leading managers of the day—Garrick, Rich, and Lacey. His play, the *Regicide*, was going the round for something like ten years. Never staged, ultimately it was published by subscription. Smollett, the disappointed dramatist, sought to avenge himself on the managers. He attributed to Lacey the statement that "no dramatic composition, however perfect, could succeed with an English audience by its own merit, but must depend entirely upon a faction raised to support it."

Against Garrick he made, as Anderson avows, "illiberal, ill-founded strictures" in the preface to "Peregrine Pickle," and other injurious reflections



in "Roderick Random" also. For these attacks, when in a more prosperous state, he offered an apology, and showed a desire to make amends by his sketch of the liberal arts under George I. contained in his "History of England."

Another example of Smollett's methods may be mentioned. For assaulting a man named Peter Gordon he was prosecuted in the Court of King's Bench. The jury acquitted him, but he nourished the strongest resentment against the leading counsel for the prosecution, to whom he presently addressed a long and abusive letter, from which it appeared that in his opinion every one connected with the case, but more especially the learned advocate, was but as dust and dirt beneath the feet of Tobias Smollett, M.D.

In truth, whatever he did, or wherever he went, Smollett always showed himself a sour and quarrelsome person. In his "Sentimental Journey" Laurence Sterne gives him the nickname of "Smelfungus," alluding in caustic terms to his snarling propensities: "The lamented Smelfungus travelled from Boulogne to Paris, from Paris to Rome, and so on; but he set out with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he passed was discoloured or distorted. He wrote an account of them, but 'twas nothing but the account of his own miserable feelings."

In the case of Admiral Vernon it was, in the language of Joe Gargery, "likewise, similar, according." When Tobias Smollett disparaged Edward

Vernon, whether in history flavoured with fiction or in fiction garnished with history, it was the pen of "Smelfungus" that was at work. Certain later writers, instead of collecting their own historical facts from earlier sources, have found it convenient to treat Smollett as a trustworthy authority. They have served up the same old dish, with the same old flavour of bitter herbs. The taint of "Smelfungus" is over them all.

Such, then, was the clever but cantankerous writer who set himself to disparage the achievements of Admiral Vernon. Smollett has long slept the sleep of the just or the unjust; but the evil that men write lives after them. It is to be hoped that naval historians of the future will not borrow his views or perpetuate his errors. In the "Dictionary of National Biography" the writer of the article on Edward Vernon affirms that the failure at Carthagera was due to Wentworth's dilatoriness and military ineptitude, and that Smollett was ignorant of the true position of affairs when he reflected on the Admiral's conduct. Readers of this memoir, perhaps, may form the opinion that a stronger term might be applied to a libel that has done so much injustice to Vernon's memory.

It is painful to find the author of a naval history, published a hundred and twenty years after the event, writing of the Admiral's "disgrace" as if it were an act of justice: "Nor, though he was undoubtedly a

brave man, in which respect he excelled his Athenian prototype, can it be denied that he deserved his fate."

Deserved his fate! On what grounds is this amazing verdict based? On the allegation, unsupported by a scrap of quoted evidence, that Vernon quarrelled with the authorities at home, "and, a few years afterwards, for publishing libels on the Admiralty, containing copies of correspondence, which it was a manifest breach of confidence to divulge, he was struck off the Navy List." What libels? If this allegation were well founded, how comes it that his enemies did not prosecute him for libel, or try him by court martial, instead of dismissing a brave and faithful servant of the State without giving him the opportunity to establish his innocence?

The most that can reasonably be alleged is that Vernon committed a technical breach of discipline by making public what was known to him in his official capacity. But this he did to avoid the greater evil of allowing his fellow-countrymen to be hoodwinked, his brother sailors to suffer continued injustice, and his own reputation to be unfairly blackened.

In lineage he was not inferior to any of the official superiors who called him to account; in naval experience and in personal character he was vastly their superior. The plain fact is that he was a reformer, and the way of reformers, like that of transgressors, is hard. He was not a man who suffered fools gladly. He had an ill-concealed contempt for men of the type

of the Duke of Newcastle—a nobleman whose capacity to direct the operations of fleets was painfully qualified by his ludicrous ignorance of geography.

Let Vernon and the Admiralty of 1745 be judged by the written word, and by their respective works. One fact is incontrovertible—though it never would have been known if the Admiral had not published his pamphlets—the views he so courageously expressed on press-gangs, and the treatment of seamen, have long since been adopted and carried into effect in the British Navy.

“Go, last of Britons, who has dared be free,  
Terror of Spain, assertor of the sea,  
'Tis true thy hand is of the trident reft,  
And nothing but thy native worth is left;  
That still will be illustriously prized,  
Tho' thou to smugglers hast been sacrificed.  
Yet grieve not, Briton, honour's still thy own,  
Tho' ne'er a coronet thy brow has known.”

The above lines, of unknown authorship, were addressed to the Admiral after he had left the service. The line referring to “smugglers” and “sacrifice” is suggestive. By his attack on the treachery of the unworthy men of Kent Vernon may have touched the pockets of people high in place and power. In every age there have been Englishmen of this odious character—men with whom profit came before patriotism. The Duke of Marlborough was not the only man who played the part of Judas. Smuggling was an enormous and disgraceful industry in 1745,

not merely because it meant robbery, but because it spelt treachery. Herein may lie some explanation of the secret causes for which Vernon was hunted out of his command. It looks as if he had his own impressions on the point, and could have put his finger on his enemy.

The Admiral, even in his enforced retirement from active service, did not sulk in his tent or become indifferent to the interests of British mariners. He could do nothing more for seamen of the Royal Navy, but as a member of Parliament he took an active part in promoting the interests of the great Herring Fishery. The report of the Select Committee, of which he was a distinguished member, led to the incorporation of the Society of Free British Fishery, of which the then Prince of Wales was appointed Governor. The sum of £500,000 was raised for the purposes of the society.

At a banquet at St. Bartholomew's Hospital on July 5, 1750, the Duke of Beaufort in the chair, Admiral Vernon was publicly thanked for his Parliamentary services in relation to the Fishery. The following lines appeared a little later in the *London Magazine* :—

#### ON MR. VERNON THE FISHERMAN.

“See Vernon still approv'd the patriot true,  
His country's service always first in view;  
Long e'er his flag was hoist in Briton's cause,  
In senate he contended for her laws;

Him strove in vain corruption's art to hush,  
 And Bob<sup>1</sup> employ'd, because he could not crush.  
 Iberia felt him on a distant shore,  
 When Britain's lightning kindled fierce he bore !  
 Tho' long neglected, when recalled he came,  
 And brandished round our coasts the guardian flame ;  
 Again disgraced, he nobly, as at first,  
 Retires, but not like Scipio in disgust.  
 Great in retreat, tho' to the Navy lost,  
 The merchant shines with voluntary cost ;  
 And more renown this private venture brings,  
 Than all the honours in the gift of kings !  
 But Vernon scores this singular applause,  
 Though forward, not alone in virtue's cause ;  
 Firm by his side a citizen appears,  
 Whose public acts outnumber far his years.  
 Proceed, O Jansen ! in thy triple state,  
 Thou tradesman, senator, and magistrate ;  
 Proceed ! each step advances thy renown  
 And Britain's fishery fix'd, thy character shall crown."

It was clear, in popular opinion, that in "disgracing" the Admiral my Lords Commissioners had, in truth, disgraced themselves.

In the same year he received, in further recognition of his public services, the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh.

Retaining the confidence of his constituency, he still took an active part in all Parliamentary debates connected with the sea service, always expressing himself with the same courageous freedom that had earned for him the admiration of his fellow-citizens and the detestation of the men in power. Thus passed the remaining years of his strenuous life until 1756. In

<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Walpole.



that year Mrs. Vernon died, and the Admiral was left quite alone, his three sons having died in early youth.]

He had fought a good fight ; his course was well-nigh run. The time was drawing near when fortune's slings and arrows and the praise or blame of men would cease to trouble him.

When Ahasuerus, the king, became aware of certain high services to the State rendered by Mordecai, the Jew, he inquired of his chamberlains what honour and dignity had been done to him. The chamberlains answered, "There is nothing done for him." So also might the Ministers of King George have answered that monarch had he bethought himself of that faithful servant of his country, Edward Vernon.

Nothing had been done for him. The peerages, the decorations, and other signs of royal gratitude and favour, had gone to lesser men. Vernon's advice on matters vital to the Navy, and therefore vital to the nation, though sought, had not been taken. He had not been thanked. He had been disgraced for his honesty and flouted for his services.

But George was not as wise or as grateful as Ahasuerus. Had he followed the example of the eastern king, who hanged Haman on the gallows that minister had meant for Mordecai, had he punished the really guilty and exalted the just, much ignominy might have been saved to England.

For what was the position in 1757, the very year, and in October, the very month, of Vernon's death ?





THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.  
From a Painting by Hoare.

Let Lord Chesterfield be called as a witness. On October 10th in that year, "snatching a moment of leisure from his extreme idleness," he writes to inform his son of—

"the present lamentable and astounding state of affairs. . . . Our invincible Armada, which cost at least half a million, sailed, as you know, some weeks ago ; the object being kept an inviolable secret ; conjectures various, and expectations great. Brest was perhaps to be taken ; but Martinico and St. Domingo at least.

"But, lo ! the important island of Aix was taken without the least resistance, 700 men made prisoners, and some pieces of cannon carried off. From thence we sailed towards Rochefort, which, it seems, was our main object ; and consequently one should have supposed that we had pilots on board who knew all the soundings and landing-places thereabouts ; but no, for General M——t asked the Admiral if he could land him and the troops near Rochefort ? The Admiral said, 'With great ease.' To which the General replied, 'But can you take me on board again ?' To which the Admiral answered, '*That*, like all naval operations, will depend upon the wind.' 'If so,' said the General, 'I'll e'en go home again.'"

So a council of war was called, and it was unanimously resolved to return, and return they did. The expectations of the whole nation had been roused, and this was the lame and impotent conclusion ! Lord Chesterfield questioned whether, in the universal disappointment and indignation, the ferment of men's minds was ever greater. Suspicions were aroused, and the most prevailing was that "the tail of the Hanover neutrality, like that of a comet, extended to Rochefort."

"What encourages the suspicion is that a French man-of-war went unmolested through our whole fleet as it lay near Rochefort.

Haddock's whole story is revived ; Michel's representations are combined with other circumstances, and the whole together makes up a mass of discontent, resentment, and even fury, greater, perhaps, than was ever known in the country before.

"These are the facts, draw your own conclusions from them ; for my part, I am lost in astonishment and conjectures, and do not know where to fix. My experience has shown me that many things which may seem extremely probable are not true ; and many which seem highly improbable are true ; so that I will conclude this article, as Josephus does almost every article of his history, with saying, *But of this every man will believe as he thinks proper.*"

But Lord Chesterfield's verdict on the whole business is free from doubt :—

"What a disgraceful year will this be in the annals of the country ! May its good genius, if ever it appears again, tear out those sheets thus stained and blotted by our ignominy !"

In truth, as the inscription on Byng's tombstone puts it, those were times—

"When bravery and loyalty  
Were insufficient securities  
For the Life and Honour  
Of a Naval Officer."

In Vernon's case the Admiralty had no pretext for depriving him of life, but they did their best to tarnish his honour and destroy his reputation. "Persuaded I am," wrote Byng in the paper he delivered in his last moments to the Marshal of the Court of Admiralty, "justice will be done to my reputation hereafter."

In Vernon's case his fellow-countrymen had done

him justice long ere he passed away to that Supreme Assize of which he had spoken in one of his letters to the Admiralty.

The sickness which proved fatal was unexpected, and, indeed, sudden. On October 28, 1757, the Admiral seemed quite well. In the early hours of the 30th he awoke from sleep, and complained to his servant of a strange feeling, which betokened a failure of the heart. A physician was sent for in haste, but already the final signal had been given. The old sailor, who had braved so many storms and faced the foe so often, had now to yield to the dread enemy—or friend disguised?—who conquers all. In that dark hour, weighing anchor for the last time, the Admiral drifted swiftly down the silent and mysterious river which falls into the Chartless Sea.



## APPENDIX

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### VERNON'S ADVICE TO THE ADMIRALTY

ON the 16th of June, 1744, Vice-Admiral Vernon received a letter from Thomas Corbett, Esq., Secretary to the Admiralty, signifying that my Lords requested Admiral Vernon's opinion upon the present system of manning and arming the Navy, and begging to know whether he would propose any alteration; to which Vice-Admiral Vernon returned the following answer:—

“NACTON, *June 18, 1744.*

“SIR,—I have received your letter of the 16th, in which you are pleased to signify that it is my Lords Commissioners or the Admiralty's desire, I should let them know my opinion, whether the present complement of men allowed to a ship of 64 guns, being 480, and of 300 men to a 50-gun ship, be a proper proportion of men agreeable to the number and weight of guns, as mentioned in your letter, of 32, 18, and 9 for the 64, and 24, 12, and 6 for the 50-gun ships; or what complement of men I think necessary for ships of these classes.

“To which I must first observe, that I take this case, as counsel would be apt to say to a young attorney, not to be fully and clearly stated for giving an opinion upon.

“For we have many ships, that are called 60 and 50-gun ships, that are built of very different proportions and strength; the one of which could support batteries of large cannon, which the others could not; and some have convenient stowage for large numbers of men, and quantities of provision for them, which the others are defective in. So that the primary inquiry is to the roominess and

strength of the ship, to know what batteries she can support, and then the numbers of men requisite are the secondary consideration.

“For in the 80-gun ship I was last in, the *Boyne*, her lower battery was 32-pounders, and the upper 12 and 9; and the apparent reason those upper batteries were not heavier, was, that the beams were so slight that the decks could not bear a heavier battery; and therefore the ships you mention, or such ships, would soon be crippled, if the strength of the decks be not the first consideration of what battery of guns it can support.

“I remember the two finest ships of their rank that ever I saw at sea were the old *Royal Sovereign* and the old *Royal Oak*; I think both said to have been built by Mr. *Fisher Harding*. They had fine batteries of guns; they were stiff ships that could rise them, when any ship could carry out a lower battery, good sailers, and good roadsters; and I think I have heard the builder told His Majesty, King Charles II., of the *Royal Oak*, that he built a ship at once—meaning, I presume, of sufficient strength and proper proportions, that did not want cobbling afterwards. It is certain those complete ships were ships of great strength and long duration, and that our modern ones are famous for neither; but, to the great cost of the Crown, have been found eminently defective in both.

“If what we meet in the public papers be true, of the *French* ships, Captain Watson was detached out singly to chase, and by whom he was taken after a gallant defence, against so superior power: one of them is called 68 guns, and said to have had 700 men, the other 64 guns, and 650 men. But if we had the opportunity of knowing the dimensions of their 64-gun ships, I doubt not they would be found of greater dimensions than those we call such with us, and at least as big as our 70-gun ships; for they don't generally crowd their ships with guns as we do; in which I think them much in the right, and that we cripple our ships by it, without any real conveniency arising from it. I have given it as my opinion in private, as well as in public, that the arbitrary power with which a half-experienced and half-judicious surveyor of the Navy hath been entrusted, had in my opinion half ruined the Navy: and I am sure I am far from being singular in that opinion; for I have been asked whether I thought the Navy would have suffered most by the loss of their battles against the *French*, or from *his* measures, which I made a moot case of; but others have

frankly said, they should have declared their opinion against Sir J——h, to whom I have no personal enmity, nor any personal reasons for having it.

“But as I think the basis and foundation of securing to this nation the blessings of the Protestant succession and continuance of this Royal Family upon the throne, principally consist in the support and maintenance of our naval power ; so I think the duty of an officer, and a faithful and dutiful subject of my Royal Master, calls upon me to avow my sentiments in this particular.

“And I appeal to Lord Winchelsea, whether I did not mention to him my thoughts of what might be a proper method for his serving His Majesty effectually in that particular, which to the best of my memory was this, viz.—That the builders of the King’s yards, and the most eminent of the builders of the merchants’ yards, should respectively draw a plan of proportions for a ship of each rank, and draw up his reasons in writing for the support of his own plan ; and then to be summoned together before their Lordships, that every one might be admitted to support his own plan, and to give answers to the objections each might have to make to what was proposed by the other. By which I thought a perfect plan might be formed, which then should be given in orders to the Surveyor to see duly executed, which I take to be the proper business of a Surveyor.

“And I fear his usurping the whole direction, or having been permitted to do it, with his too much pride and self-sufficiency to be capable of being better informed, and too little good sense or solid judgment for being capable of directing all himself, has made ours a declining Navy in the art of ship-building, at a time when both *France* and *Spain* have been greatly improved in it. I think these are matters that require a timely and serious consideration ; and in that view I joined with those, who were for having such an enquiry entered upon, by a Select Committee of the House of Commons ; where it might have been carefully enquired into by the time, care, and application, that such a thing would require, if it had not been jockeyed off by those who disliked all enquiries ; though they may be necessary when those whose proper province it is, seem to think it to be too much trouble for them.

“I am sure I think it very highly for His Majesty’s service, somebody should enquire into it before it be too late ; as I

apprehend our Royal Master's true interest is most likely to be the fatal sacrifice of not making some such timely enquiry. I thank God I have always served the Crown faithfully and diligently in every post that has fallen to my lot to be called upon for the Crown's service ; as I hope I shall ever do with a steady fidelity becoming the duty of a faithful and loyal subject ; in which view I have given this as my answer to their Lordships' enquiry, and am,

“ Sir,  
 “ Your most humble servant,  
 “ E. VERNON.”

This letter seems to have given such offence to the Board of Admiralty, that upon the Naval promotion, which came out on the 23rd of June, 1744, only five days afterwards, Vice-Admiral Vernon was passed over, and his name appears to have been removed from the list of Admirals.

The promotions were as follows :—

Nicholas Haddock, Esq.	}	To be Admirals of the Blue.
Sir Chaloner Ogle,		
James Steuart, Esq.	}	To be Vice-Admirals of the Red.
Sir Charles Hardy,		
Thomas Davers, Esq.	}	To be Vice-Admirals of the White.
Hon. George Clinton,		
William Rowley, Esq.	}	To be Vice-Admirals of the Blue.
William Martin, Esq.		
Isaac Townsend, Esq.		To be Rear-Admiral of the Red.
Henry Medley, Esq.		To be Rear-Admiral of the White.
George Anson, Esq.		To be Rear-Admiral of the White.

### VERNON'S REMONSTRANCE

Vice-Admiral Vernon was *senior* to *Nicholas Haddock*, and on being passed over in this extraordinary manner, he wrote the following letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, to be laid before the Lords Commissioners :—

“NACTON, *June 30, 1744.*

“TO THOMAS CORBETT, ESQ., SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

“SIR,—As we that live retired in the country often content ourselves with the information we derive from the newspaper on a market day, I did not so early observe the advertisement from your office of the 23rd of this month, *That in pursuance of His Majesty's pleasure, the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, had made the following promotions therein mentioned.* In which I could not but observe there was no mention of my name among the flag officers, though by your letter of the 16th inst. you directed to me as *Vice-Admiral of the Red*, and (by their Lordships' orders) desired my opinion on an affair for His Majesty's service, which I very honestly gave them, as I judged most conducive to his honour; so that their Lordships could not be uninformed that I was in the land of the living.

“Though the promotions are said to be made by their Lordships' orders, yet, we all know the communication of His Majesty's pleasure must come from the First Lord in the Commission; from whom principally His Majesty is supposed to receive his information on which his Royal orders are founded. And as it is a known maxim of our law, that the King can do no wrong, founded as I apprehend on the persuasion that the Crown never does so, but from the misinformation of those whose respective provinces are to inform His Majesty of the particular affairs under their care, the first suggestion that naturally occurs to an officer, that has the fullest testimony in his custody of having happily served His Majesty, in the command he was intrusted with, to his Royal approbation, is, that your first Commissioner must either have informed His Majesty that I was dead, or have laid something to my charge rendering me unfit to rise in my rank in the Royal Navy; of which, being insensible myself, I desire their Lordships would be pleased to inform me in what it consists, having both in action and advice, always to the best of my judgment, endeavoured to serve our Royal Master with a zeal and activity becoming a faithful and loyal subject, and having hitherto received the approbation of your Board. I confess at my time of life, a retirement from the hurry of business to prepare for the *general audit*, which every Christian ought to have perpetually in his mind,



is what cannot but be desirable, and might rather give me occasion to rejoice than any concern, which (I thank God) it does very little ; yet, that I might not by any be thought to be one that would decline the public service, I have thought proper to remind their Lordships I am living, and have (I thank God) the same honest zeal reigning in my breast, that has animated me on all occasions, to approve myself a faithful and zealous subject and servant to my Royal Master ; and if the First Lord Commissioner has represented me in any other light to our Royal Master, he has acted with a degeneracy unbecoming the descendant from a noble father, whose memory I reverence and esteem, though I have no compliments to make to the judgment or conduct of the son."

(Signed) "E. VERNON."

N.B.—To this no answer was returned.

### VERNON'S COMMAND IN THE DOWNS

On the 10th of December, 1745, from his ship the *Norwich*, in the Downs, Admiral Vernon wrote the following seasonable letter to the Captains of three Dover privateers :—

"BROTHER SAILORS,—Captain Gregory having reported the hearty honest zeal you have expressed for the service of His Majesty, and preservation of your country from the threatened attempts of the inveterate enemy to our laws, religion, and liberty, which like honest, true-hearted brother sailors you had roundly set about manifesting by your actions, the sincerity of your declarations, as your own judgment informs you of the present necessity for it, and that we cannot be too nimble for being beforehand with them, as according to the old proverb, delays are dangerous ; I take the earliest opportunity to send by Captain Gregory my hearty thanks for the honest and laudable zeal you have expressed for the service of His Majesty and your country under my orders ; and to assure you that I will take care to do justice to the merits of every one's services, and that no endeavour of mine shall be wanting for procuring you a just, equitable, and prompt consideration for the merit of your willing service, that you confide in the honour and justice of the Crown for your being amply considered : for I am, brother officers,

"Both yours and all our honest brother sailors' friend and humble servant,

(Signed) "E. VERNON."



On Friday, the 20th of December, Admiral Vernon sent the following letter to John Norris, Esq. at Deal Castle :—

“ *Norwich*, in the Downs, December 20, 1745.

“ SIR,—As from the intelligence I have procured last night of the enemy’s having brought away from Dunkirk great numbers of their small embarkations, and many of them laden with cannon, field carriages, powder, shot, and other military stores ; the Irish troops being marched out of Dunkirk, towards Calais ; General Lowendahl, and many other officers, being at Dunkirk, with a young person among them they call the Prince, and was said to be the second son of the Pretender ; as I can’t apprehend they are preparing for a descent from the ports of Calais and Boulogne, and which I suspect may be attempted at Dungeness, where many of my cruisers are in motion for, and I have some thoughts of my moving to-morrow with part of my ships, if the weather should be moderate for a descent ; I thought it my duty, for His Majesty’s service, to advise you of it, and to desire you will communicate this my letter to the Mayor of Deal, and that the neighbouring towns should have advice for assembling for their common defence ; that my cruisers’ signals, for discovering the approach of an enemy, will be their jack-flag flying at their top-mast head, and firing a gun every half-hour, and to desire they will forward the alarm.

“ I am, Sir, your humble servant,

“ E. VERNON.

“ To JOHN NORRIS, Esq., at Deal Castle,  
or to the Mayor of Deal in his absence.”

## OFFICIAL LETTERS AND THE “PAMPHLETS”

[EXTRACTS.]

The Admiral, on the 1st of January, 1746, struck his flag, and handed over the command in the Downs to Vice-Admiral Martin ; and at the same time wrote the following letter to the Duke of Bedford, then First Lord of the Admiralty :—

“ *January 2, 1746.*

“ MY LORD DUKE,—Your Grace having, from a nobleness of mind and humanity of temper becoming of your high birth, espoused the

cause of an injured innocent person, and honoured with marks of your generous friendship an officer you thought so deserving of it, so as to become his advocate, and procure his being restored to his rank in the Royal Navy, and employed in it accordingly at this critical conjuncture ; as a testimony of your Grace's confidence that he had judgment to execute it, and an honest zeal for approving himself a faithful, zealous, and diligent officer and servant to our Royal Master. And I hope in God as well as I sincerely believe it to be true, that this officer, in the person of your humble servant the writer, has had that just regard for the discharge of the duty confided to him through your Grace's means, that he may with confidence assert that he has acted circumspectly, diligently, and assiduously in the execution of that trust, as to have manifested to the world, that your Grace was neither deceived in your judgment of his capacity for the service of the Crown, nor his inclination to discharge his duty to our Royal Master, with a sincere honest zeal, for approving himself His Majesty's faithful subject and servant, which he has had the double incitement to, of his duty to the King, and the just regard he ought to have for justifying your Grace in the good opinion you had entertained of him ; as I am conscious I have done nothing ever justly to forfeit that good opinion that engaged your Grace to honour me with your patronage and friendship, I entertain too good an opinion of your Grace to think I have not the continuance of it, *notwithstanding the late incident of my being hunted out of my command by the operative malice of some malicious and industrious agent, that is too well screened over, for my being able particularly to discover him and point out who it is ;* so that must remain to me a secret, till some happy Providence in the course of time may more clearly discover it ; not being nevertheless in my own mind doubtful, but I can trace the original cause of it, and guess pretty nearly at who may be the concealed director of it.

“As the pen of the Secretary of the Admiralty conveyed these bitter shafts that were levelled at me, I thought it right to suggest that his pen might be tinged with a gall flowing from his own mind, beyond the direction he might receive for it, from which I thought it my duty to acquit him on a gentlemanlike apology in regard to his office, which I was no stranger to his duty to obey, and on an assurance of a goodwill he had always possessed, and I

well knew I had never given him occasion to alter the sentiments of a professed friendship for me.

“And one of the occasions taken to justify this conduct towards me, having been that I had, within the Channel o. England, on a ship’s service being immediately wanted for proceeding to sea, and being without a gunner (certainly a necessary officer for her defence), and which I could not think myself justified in permitting to go to sea without, presumed, as it is called, to warrant a gunner to her, as I judged it to be absolutely necessary for His Majesty’s service, and the defence of the ship.

“And having now stated the fact, I shall presume to give your Grace my sentiments in that particular, viz.—That it is my opinion, that when the Admiralty is ordered by the Crown to fit out a fleet for the service of the Government in the Channel of England, or on foreign service, and the Admiralty had commissioned them out of the sea officers on shore, and appointed the Admiral to command in chief, in pursuance of His Majesty’s pleasure, and the fleet were assembled together, that to support the necessary command of the officer the King had appointed, it was the Government’s interest that the Commander-in-Chief should name all officers (*sic*) that fell vacant, and has not been denied while the depending service was essential ; but pretences from the Admiralty that the ships were not assembled, or not under orders, and as checks are in their power, they have contradicted it, though always to the prejudice of the Crown’s service. For when the people of the fleet see their Commander-in-Chief can neither support their pretensions to merit, nor his own authority over them, they must naturally look after those who are no judges of their service, and renders the Commander contemptible to the fleet. This power is known to have been absolute in the Commanders-in-Chief in the Channel, and in one who has added honours to your Grace’s family ; and when that power has been wanting, has, I believe, been always found prejudicial to the service of the Crown and prosperity of the kingdom.

“And having given your Grace the trouble of reading my sentiments in this particular, I will now proceed to declare, that it is my opinion that this is the sentiment of Sir John Norris likewise, and that your Grace has most grossly been imposed upon in the assertion of Sir John Norris being of a contrary opinion ; and I thank God

that Sir John Norris is now living, who can satisfy your Grace, His Majesty, or the public, what are his sentiments, whenever it be thought proper to take his opinion upon it.

“Your Grace may think I talk with much confidence of Sir John Norris’s opinion at this distance, but when I inform your Grace that I have served immediately under his command as a Lieutenant, when he served as first Captain under that brave, honest, and experienced Admiral, Sir Cloudesley Shovel, who was an honour to his country and the service, and whom, I believe, no man knew that did not love and esteem him ; and I have on several occasions served as a Captain under Sir John Norris, whom I know to be a consummately experienced and gallant sea-officer, and have lived in an uninterrupted friendship with him ; your Grace will not be surprised that I venture to assert what is his opinion as well as my own ; and were you to consult Admiral Matthews or Sir Chaloner Ogle, though I don’t pretend to give you now my opinion in regard to them, yet I do verily believe this to be their opinion likewise ; but of this it is easily in your Grace’s power to satisfy yourself.

“I shall now only add that I am at present detained here, for having my baggage embarked for proceeding to Harwich in one of the armed vessels Vice-Admiral Martin has been so obliging to assign me, to carry to my house on the Ipswich river. I propose, at present, being in London on Tuesday or Wednesday night ; whenever it is I shall be at your Grace’s door the next morning after my arrival, in order to pay my duty to your Grace, and afterwards before I set out for Suffolk (if it has your Grace’s approbation) to be presented by you to pay my duty to His Majesty. And the favour I shall now desire of your Grace is, that your Porter may have orders from you to let me in, if such a visit be agreeable to your Grace, and if not, that I may be told so, not to give an unnecessary trouble to you or myself.

“I have begun with expressing a grateful sense of the testimony of the friendship you have honoured me with, which on all events I shall ever retain, as I may say it is a sort of hereditary inclination in our family, to have entertained an honour for your Grace, from the memory of that glorious martyr for the liberties of his country, my Lord William Russell, the memory of which has in some manner been transmitted to posterity with my father’s hand, whom

I think was the Draughtsman or the Ducal Patent in your Grace's family ; and I have heard it much commended for the elegance or the style, and the just honours done to a nobleman, of so many amiable qualities, unsullied by any vices that ever I heard of. That your Grace may live and die as great an honour to your family, shall ever be the sincere wish of, &c., &c.,

"E. VERNON."

On January 7, 1746, Admiral Vernon arrived in London, and on the 10th went down to his country seat in Suffolk ; and finding that it was supposed he had been *removed* from his command, for not being sufficiently active against the enemy, he took steps to contradict such reports, and a short time afterwards two pamphlets appeared ; the one entitled "Some Seasonable Advice from an Honest Sailor, to whom it might have concerned for the Service of the Crown and Country" ; and the other "A Specimen of Naked Truth from a British Sailor." From which the following are extracts :—

First pamphlet, entitled "Some Seasonable Advice from an Honest Sailor, to whom it might have concerned for the Service of the Crown and Country."

This pamphlet contained all Admiral Vernon's letters to the Admiralty from August 4th to December 26th, a few of which, with extracts from others, are here given, to show the Admiral's opinion on different matters of interest in the Navy.

#### IMPRESSING OF SEAMEN.

On October 10, 1745, he wrote as follows to the Admiralty :—

"Our long-boats and cutters are all employed for impressing seamen, as their Lordships directed (but to be sure the greater part of them will escape, as they are as industrious to avoid it, as we can be to execute it), and which I shall do with all possible diligence, as it is my duty, being ordered, *though much against my judgment and inclination*.

"The East and West India men are generally in a scorbutic state, that requires some refreshment and smell of the shore to recover them from, and for want of which it is to be feared the lives of many useful subjects to (*sic*) His Majesty are lost to the public.



"I believe no one thinks the Crown of France is defective in any power over their subjects ; but yet even there, they show a great humanity for the preservation of the health of their seamen, and care of them when sick ; and having brought them to a regular rotation of service, they are never under the restraint and confinement that ours are ; and therefore I can't but think it honest advice for His Majesty's service, that some Parliamentary provision should be provided for the Crown's obtaining the *voluntary service* of our seamen ; that those who are to be depended upon for the defence of our present Royal Family, our religion, and liberties, should not be the only persons in this country that appear to have no liberty at all."

## TREATMENT OF OUR SAILORS.

" *November 5, 1745.*"

He says, "It will be necessary to reconcile the affections of the seamen to the public service by a more humane treatment than they are at present subject to. I have long lamented their situation, and made some faint attempts towards relieving it, which appeared equitable, and might have been rendered effectual, in my poor apprehension.

"For my own part, I have previously considered it in the light that the preservation of our holy religion and support of the blessings of a Protestant succession, for securing that and our liberties under His Majesty's protection, depend entirely on our maintaining a superiority at sea, which will be always in danger of being lost, when we lose the affections of our seamen, to contribute to the preserving it. And therefore I shall always think it the cause of God and the King, and worthy the most serious consideration of all who wish to secure to themselves the happy enjoyment of both ; and I hope their Lordships will be so good as to excuse at least the overflowing of my zeal for both, from the apprehensions of the danger that may arise to them for want of a timely attention to it."

" *November 26, 1745.*"

"The *Sheerness* coming to an anchor, but just as I was despatching my letters away for the post, I had by that occasion only the pleasure to acquaint you that I hoped the Privateer prize he



was bringing in, might prove one of the three I had intelligence had sailed from Dunkirk. As soon as I knew she *was* one of those three, I immediately made a signal for Lieutenants for draughting out of her all that were not subjects of France, but were going to join the rebels in Scotland ; and as the Captain told me, there was one there they called my Lord Derwentwater and his son, I ordered the Lieutenant or this ship to bring those two persons as part of those to be brought on board this ship, and he accordingly brought here the forfeiting Lord Derwentwater's younger brother, and his son, who has a commission as Captain in my Lord Dillon's regiment, in the service of the French King. His father is in regimentals, and claims to be an officer in his service likewise ; but has not yet produced any such commission to me, and fears through carelessness it may have been mislaid, &c."

#### TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ADMIRALTY.

" *December 1st.*

"I have read with great surprise the long paragraph in your letter, informing me their Lordships don't approve of my having appointed a gunner to the *Pool*, when the necessity of the service required it, and His Majesty's service must have suffered for the want of it ; and acquainting me, it is their Lordships' directions I should withdraw the warrants I gave to them for His Majesty's service.

"I must say with concern, in answer to it, that I did not expect to have been treated in such a contemptuous manner, and that I can hardly conceive it to be their directions, till I see it under their hands in an order for me to do it ; and shall now intreat the favour of their Lordships that if they think it deserves an order, they will be pleased to direct it to my successor to put in execution ; as I must in such case intreat the favour of their Lordships to procure me His Majesty's leave to quit a command, I have long thought too contemptibly treated, in regard to the rank I hold, for His Majesty's honour and service ; and I should rather choose to serve His Majesty in the capacity of a private man in the Militia, than to permit the rank I hold in His Majesty's service to be treated with contempt ; which I conceive to be neither for our Royal Master's honour or service. A private Captain over two ships, on any foreign service, exercises the power of filling up all vacancies

under him, and it is for His Majesty's service he should be empowered to do so.

"When I attended the —— I was spoke (*sic*) to as a person of confidence that was to have had the chief command at home ; their Lordships' orders of the 7th of August seemed to design me for such, though speedily altered by those of the 14th, and I always suspected there was something lurking under the avoiding to call me Commander-in-Chief anywhere, but only Admiral of the White ; though at the same time letters passed through my hands directed to Vice-Admiral Martin (whom by my first orders I was to take under my command), styling him Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty's ships in the *Soundings*.

"But your letter, Sir, has now explained the whole to me. I shall only add, this power I have known to be practised by Admirals in the Channel ; that I think it for His Majesty's service ought to be in exercise by them. The power of Rewards as well as Punishments I look upon to be essentially necessary to a Commander-in-Chief for serving His Majesty effectually ; and without it His Majesty's service will suffer in this particular ; those that are expecting preferments in the Navy seeking it by cringing ashore, instead of endeavouring to merit it by their services to His Majesty on board his ships of war, under the eye of those intrusted with the command of them. I hope their Lordships will not think it too great a favour for me to be dispensed with the executing a direction I look upon to be prejudicial to His Majesty's service, and a treatment of me which I could not conceive I could have been thought to have merited from their Lordships ; but their relieving me from it, by a successor, will be the only favour I shall think of troubling their Lordships with."

"December 5th.

"I have to acknowledge yours of the 3rd, with the two papers of intelligence inclosed of this present intended invasion, which I am inclined to think is in their intentions ; but imagine they may wait first for some intelligence from their friends and spies the smugglers, of some success to the rebels for encouraging them in it ; for I am sure our late weather will not be esteemed any great encouragement to them in it for fear they should meet Pharaoh's fate, &c.

"I was glad to hear the Secretary of War is wrote to for sending orders to the troops quartered at Deal to have regard to prevent desertions from our hospital and sick quarters.

"I am now come to the last part of your letter, in answer to mine of the 1st, and was pleased to find you had quoted the precedent of Sir John Norris's case in the year 1740.

"Sir John Norris thought it right to appoint two officers on a vacancy that happened under his command, and I dare answer for him would not have thought it right, but as he judged it for His Majesty's service, and that his predecessors had done it before him ; and I don't think any one will say that Lord Orford, Sir George Rooke, Sir Cloudesley Shovel, Lord Aylmer, Lord Berkeley, Lord Torrington, and Sir Charles Wager have not done the same.

"Sir John Norris thought it so much a right in him, that when a person was sent down by the Board to supersede a warrant granted by him, he sent the person back with his warrant, and he was not received while he commanded. But when the service was over, and he returned to town, their Lordships superseded him : so that his acquiescence was necessity, not approbation.

"I dare say Marshal Wade has a power to fill up all vacancies of inferior officers under his command, now he is in the field, at least under the degree of a Field Officer ; and as I think it for His Majesty's service, it should be so, and that it can't be hoped for to be carried on successfully without it ; as I look upon His Majesty's service to be the sacrifice, in rendering the power and authority of His Majesty's General Officers contemptible.

"In France they are distinguished by the same general name, and I have thought proper to make use of it here. And as I think it would be for His Majesty's service, to have this whole affair laid before His Majesty, for his Royal pleasure being known in what most essentially concerns him, I hope their Lordships will lay the whole proceeding before His Majesty, and am very desirous that the sentiments I have entertained of what is most for His Majesty's honour and service may stand the test of his Royal approbation or approval.

"The weekly accounts returned regularly every week, are an information to their Lordships' Secretary of what vacancies have happened, and they not being supplied, and the necessity of the service requiring a ship to be sent to sea for His Majesty's service,

an Admiral bearing the white flag at the maintopmast-head, has warranted a gunner for the *Pool*, by removing a gunner of a sixth rate into her, and appointing a gunner to the sixth rate, who is a very good man, extremely well qualified for it, which has often been known not to be the case of some sent down by the Admiralty, where corporation interest may sometimes have had more influence than the merit of public service ; though the latter is most undoubtedly for the honour and interest of the Crown ; but the filling up the vacancy of a gunner is judged of so much importance to the *fees* of a Secretary of the Admiralty, that it is thought requisite to be writing letters as long as a Bill in Chancery upon it, which I think to be treating me in a contemptuous manner, I in no sort deserve.

“If it be thought proper to lay the whole before His Majesty, I think it could not be done at a more proper season for His Majesty’s information, than when there is living an Admiral of so long and faithful services, as the Right Honourable Sir John Norris, who is now in London.”

“*December 8th.*

“I am glad to hear so active an officer as Captain Boscawen is appointed to succeed Commodore Smith in the command at the Nore ; and conclude the *Royal Sovereign* is ordered to have her lower tier on board, as that must be her principal defence and annoyance to an enemy, as she lies within the sands, where she can make use of them.

“I have their Lordships’ orders of the 5th, and when any Custom-house vessels arrive here to put themselves under my command, I shall immediately employ them to keep a watchful eye on the enemy’s movements, that I may have the earliest advice for the attending on them wherever they go ; which, if they come with those large fishing shallops, can’t be designed for any other parts than the counties of Kent or Sussex.

“I am glad to be able to acquaint their Lordships, that I hear the Dover privateers are willing to enter into the service of the Crown upon monthly pay, &c.

“Though we are so short of seamen, I can assure their Lordships that it has not been for want of putting in execution their Lordships’ orders about impressing.

“But when we have sent our men away in exchange, the long

restraint they have been under makes most of them very backward in returning, and some to desert entirely, for of twenty-one sent up from this ship, not above three are yet returned ; and one fatal consequence of the continuance of the custom of impressing (a hardship upon our seamen, practised I fear in no other nation in the manner we do) has driven our merchants to man their ships, homeward bound, often with the greater part of them foreign seamen, by which even the *press* is disappointed ; and the impressing in general from confining great numbers of them together for a long time, and from depriving others from necessary refreshments on shore to preserve the health of human bodies, destroys the lives of numbers annually, and occasions a general sickness among all the ships of the Fleet ; this ship having above sixty sick on shore, besides thirty sick on board, so that many of our ships are moving hospitals ; and impressing and general restraint is the occasion of it. For the human bodies can't support such long confinement on salt water, without being relieved by the refreshments of the shore, as even medicines cannot cure the radicated scurvies contracted by it. And as I esteem it to be highly for His Majesty's honour and service that, while a Parliament is sitting, some humane method should be established for preserving the lives of so valuable a body of men as our seamen, and reconciling their goodwill to the public service ; from which, in my opinion, great honour would result to the Crown, and great prosperity and security to the kingdom, which is even now much endangered, from no such humane methods being established ; and as this is the only proper time a remedy can be sought for, and when the want of it was never more conspicuous, a sincere zeal for the honour and service of our Royal Master, and for the security and prosperity of his kingdoms, has prompted me to suggest my opinion in it to their Lordships for His Majesty's service.

"Though the troops may not be at leisure either for mounting guard at our hospitals or preventing desertions, I hope they have general orders, wherever they are, to take up straggling seamen, and sending them to the sea-ports, for His Majesty's service."

"December 13<sup>th</sup>.

"I am extremely pleased their Lordships have sent the part of my letter, relating to the smugglers, to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, as I hope their Lordships will see Mr. S——'s opinion or



them too, that I sent their Lordships up by express yesterday ; for whatever calamities are likely to befall us, I am persuaded their treachery has in a great measure contributed to them.

“As to what I am so politely acquainted of, that their Lordships have appointed a gunner to the *Pool*; after my having informed their Lordships I had warranted the gunner of the *Sheerness* to that ship ; I must acquaint you in answer, it was what I little expected, and that I am determined to follow the example of Sir John Norris, and not permit that indignity to be put on me, while I remain in command here, but when he arrives shall civilly send him back again. That officer that don't picque (*sic*) himself on supporting his own honour and the dignity of the commission he holds under His Majesty, may not be the likeliest to defend the honour of his Prince, and the security of his country, against the face of his enemies ; and I will therefore never take the fatal step of abandoning my own honour. I have long suspected the ambition or envy of some one to have been driving their shafts at me : I hope that is not a reason the dignity of the flag I bear is so slightly supported. I will do the best I can to serve His Majesty diligently, faithfully, and resolutely, while I am continued in command here ; but as this treatment is a very ordinary return to it, I can't but say I have reason to be sick of a command under such usage.”

“*December 16th.*

“Their Lordships, I find by yours, seem to be as greatly surprised at my remonstrances, as I am at their treatment of me, that has given me so just an occasion for them, and which I think His Majesty's honour and service require I should have been redressed in, as I conceive it to be highly prejudicial to His Majesty's honour and service to have his principal General Officers treated with contempt when they are at the head of his forces, and endeavouring to exert themselves to the best of their abilities for serving him faithfully and resolutely, in supporting the honour of the Crown and the defence of his kingdoms.

“The present force now with me for that purpose, are two 50-gun ships, two 40-gun ships, and two sloops, together with two 20-gun ships at present stationed on the back of the sands to watch their motions from Dunkirk and Ostend, and early to advise me of it ; one sloop more between me and them, and the three



Dover frigates, by my means so early engaged into the Crown's service ; two of them to watch their motions to the westward of Dunkirk, for preventing their slipping out to the westward, and the third close off Ostend, to the eastward of my cruisers, which I will call a prudent and well-concerted disposition ; and the *Bedford*, private ship of war, is out under the same orders ; but I can't so well answer for the regularity of his execution of them. And this force, thus described, it seems my offence is, I have called a *flotilla* ; and in regard to the importance of what it is to prevent, a descent on His Majesty's dominions with 12,000 men, I think it was right in me to call it a *flotilla*.

"Two ships more, indeed, besides those detached from hence to join Rear-Admiral B——, have been cruising on the Dogger-bank under my orders, which are the *Mary Galley* and the *Squirrel*, the term of whose cruise expired on the 10th : and as they have had nothing but southerly winds, they have been prevented by them from their return here, pursuant to my orders. But if they are endeavouring to execute them by plying up to return here, they can't be better in the way of intercepting any of the embarkations going for Scotland.

"We are not particularly informed what are the strength of the several ships they have collected together for the present for this embarkation ; but I am fully persuaded there are among them many more of their privateers, taken up for the French King's service in it, than I have of His Majesty's ships under my command ; and the *La Fine* and *L'Emeraude*, I am informed, were French ships of war. And all their Lordships' advices, as well as mine, have agreed, that they have been told and have been expecting, that a squadron of French men-of-war from Brest or the western ports, should come to join them, and cover the said supposed intended descent ; and I have, pursuant to my duty, and from the result of my experience, suggested to their Lordships, that with a southerly wind it was very practicable for them to get by unobserved by our ships to the westward ; and if the others were ready to sail with them, when they had slipped by, and they too strong for me, they might execute their descent before their Lordships could have time to apply a preventive remedy against it, and they would have to trust to going north about, to avoid any force that might be collected together afterwards. And I will repeat it again, that I think the three-deck ships assembled at Portsmouth a

very improper force to be hazarded in these northern seas, in this winter season of the year, and believe there is no sea officer that is a seaman, that thinks otherwise, and would say so if he was asked ; but my present duty and honest zeal for His Majesty's service, calls upon me to say so unasked. And if their Lordships think they have a properer officer to serve His Majesty in this station, God forbid I should be any obstacle to their sending him down to be employed here ; on the contrary, I shall have a pleasure in resigning a command to him, their contemptuous treatment of me can give me but little satisfaction in. And though at this critical conjuncture I will decline nothing for His Majesty's service, I will repeat it, that I should serve His Majesty as a private man in the Militia with more pleasure than I take in this command under the treatment I have met with of late ; since the two noble Lords, at the head of the Board, through the manifestation of their zeal for His Majesty's service, for defeating the progress of the pilfering rebels within the kingdom, have been called away from their attendance at it.

"The enemy's daily intelligence of our progress, I have frequently repeated it to their Lordships, comes from our profligate and, as I esteem them, traitorous smugglers ; which I think it is high time there should be an effectual stop put to, before these vipers shall have carried on their fatal intercourse with His Majesty's enemies, to the enabling them to attack us where we may be weakest ; and have assisted them in the execution of it, as the intelligence I sent their Lordships points out they were retained for."

Then came the publication of the "Pamphlets" which led to the final correspondence :—

"ADMIRALTY OFFICE, *April 4, 1746.*

"SIR,—I wrote to you on the 25th of last month, by direction of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, to know whether you had any hand in publishing two very extraordinary pamphlets therein mentioned, containing extracts of your correspondence with the Board, whilst you commanded His Majesty's squadron in the Downs ; or whether you know by what means they were communicated to the press ?

"Their Lordships, after having made the strictest enquiry, had the strongest reason to believe that they could proceed from no

other channel but yours ; notwithstanding which, out of regard to the rank you hold in His Majesty's service, they were unwilling to think you capable of handing those papers into the world without name, and more especially in so imperfect and disingenuous a manner, that they appear to be calculated to mislead and deceive, rather than inform the reader ; and for this reason they have given you an opportunity of justifying yourself, if you are able, or think proper to do it.

"But not having received any answer from you upon this subject, I am directed to acquaint you, that if they do not hear from you in a week from this date, either by a letter or by your attending at the Board, to give them a satisfactory account, at least with regard to your own behaviour in this transaction, they must take it for granted, by your not denying it, that you are the publisher of both those pamphlets, and must proceed accordingly.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"THOS. CORBETT."

To this letter the Admiral replied :—

"April 8, 1746.

"SIR,—Upon my return to my house on Monday night late, from the country, soon after, one of your messengers brought me a letter of yours of the 4th instant, which, on perusal, I can't conceive even your long experience can ever have furnished any precedent for a letter of so extraordinary a nature. Whenever their Lordships think my attendance on them necessary for His Majesty's service, as I know it is my duty to pay a ready attendance on their orders for my doing so, I shall not fail to do it whenever they appoint it.

"I thank God I have hitherto discharged my duty to the Crown in every station I have been called to serve in, with a diligent care and attention to His Majesty's service, as was my duty ; and as I have ever looked upon it, of every one in His Majesty's service, in their respective stations, and hope I have carefully kept clear of intermixing any private passions of mine with the public service.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"E. VERNON."

An interview, already referred to, then followed, and the next day Admiral Vernon received the following letter :—

“*April 11, 1746.*”

“SIR,—I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to inform you that the several matters which passed between their Lordships and yourself, with relation to two pamphlets lately published, entitled, ‘A Specimen of Naked Truth from a British Sailor’; and, ‘Some Seasonable Advice from an Honest Sailor, to whom it might have concerned, for the Service of the Crown and Country,’ having been laid, by his Grace the Duke of Bedford, before the King, His Majesty has been pleased to direct their Lordships to strike your name out of the list of Flag Officers.

“I am, Sir,

“Your most humble servant,

“T. CORBETT.”



# INDEX

## A

"A Specimen of Naked Truth,"  
the Admiral's pamphlets, 258  
*et seq.*

Addison, Joseph, and Covent  
Garden, 21; Under-Secretary  
of State, 21

Admiralty Conference attended  
by Vernon, 121

Admirals, English, after retire-  
ment of Vernon, 243 *et seq.*

Albemarles, Court favourites,  
242; Lord Chesterfield's  
criticism, 242

Alberoni, Cardinal, Prime Min-  
ister of Spain, 99; his  
hostility to England, 100;  
expedition sent to invade  
England, 101

American colonists in expedi-  
tion to Carthage, 166

Ancaster, Duke of, taken to the  
watch-house, 246

Anne, Queen, Thackeray on her  
reign, 35; Sarah Jennings,  
Duchess of Marlborough,  
35

## B

Baker, Admiral, expedition  
against Barbary pirates, 98

Baltic, Vernon serves in, 61,  
102

Bantry Bay, battle of, 11

Barbary pirates: Delgarno, Cap-  
tain, his gallant sea-fight,  
98

Bathurst, Lord, moves House of  
Lords for production of  
Admiral Vernon's Admiralty  
instructions to, 144

Battle, order of in the old  
Navy, 64 *et seq.*

Beachy Head, battle of, 12;  
court martial on Torrington,  
13; Nottingham's letter to  
Ambassador in Holland, 13

Beaufort, Duke of, and Vernon's  
public services, 280

Bedford, Duke of, and Admiral  
Vernon, 201

Bellamont, Earl of, and Captain  
Kidd, 88, 89

Benbow, Admiral, at St. Malo,  
31; his gallantry and death,  
32-3; letter to him from  
French Admiral, 33

Blake and the British Flag,  
63

Blakeney, General, and Minorca,  
224, 226; Horace Walpole's  
allusions to, 240

Blunt, and the South Sea Bubble,  
104

Bolingbroke, Lord Henry St.  
John, enters Parliament, 80;  
impeachment of Somers, Mon-  
tague, and others, 80, 81;



escape to France, 82 ; and his jealousies, 82

Boscawen, Edward, at Carthage, 165 ; his nicknames in the Fleet, 165 ; figures in fiction, 165

Bowen, Captain, press-gang at Gosport, 251

Braddock as a general, 241

Brest, attack on by Admirals Berkeley and Carmarthen, 31

Brett, Captain, his exploit, 203

British seamen forced to serve on Spanish warships, 101

*Briton*, the, edited by Smollett, 273

Brown, Commodore, leads attack under Vernon at Porto-Bello, 134

Buckingham, Duchess or, and Pope's satire, 35

Burnet, Bishop, tribute to Admiral Shovel, 72 ; on embezzlement and abuses in Navy, 93

Busby, Dr., Headmaster of Westminster School, 7 ; anecdotes concerning, 7 *et seq.*

Byng, Admiral George, at battle of Malaga, 51 ; in storm off Scilly Islands in 1707, 73 ; expedition to Baltic, 98

Byng, Admiral John, sails for Minorca, 224 ; his failure off Minorca, 226 ; Sir Edward Hawke supersedes him, 226 ; popular clamour against him, 226 *et seq.* ; tried by court martial, 228 ; Parliamentary debates and the result, 231 *et seq.* ; Lord Torrington's effort to save him, 231 ; shot in Portsmouth Harbour, 234

## C

Cadiz, expedition against, under Rooke, 38 ; expedition from, to invade England, 101

Callemberg, Vice-Admiral, commands Dutch squadron at Malaga, 51

Canterbury, Archbishop of, plants tree at Mount Vernon in 1904, 168

Carolina, question as to boundaries, 119

Carmarthen, Admiral, 31

Carte, a Jacobite historian, and Sir R. Walpole, 148

Carter, Admiral, accused of treachery, 6

Carteret, Lord, 174

Carthage, Vernon's projected attack on, 138 ; description of, 153 ; its garrison and geographical position, 153 ; capture of, by Vernon, 154 *et seq.* ; allusions in "Roderick Random," 157 *et seq.*

Cathcart, Lord, death of, 150

Catherine of Braganza, marriage to Charles II., 183 ; Evelyn's description, 184 ; Pepys' comments, 184

Cave, persistence in publishing Parliamentary reports, 121 *et seq.*

Charles I., King, honour paid to his bust, 181 ; Lord Wimbledon's letter to Mayor of Portsmouth concerning, 182

Charles II., his marriage at Portsmouth, 183

Chesterfield, Lord, on Admiral Vernon after Porto-Bello, 142 ; on Pitt the elder, 175 ;

criticises Albemarle, 242 ; on naval affairs, 283, 284  
 City Companies' interest in naval supremacy, 19  
 Cockburn's dashing exploit at Brest, 225  
 Commons, House of, vote £100,000 reward for apprehension of Pretender, 96 ; vote of £500,000 in respect of seamen's wages, 111  
 Contraband, restrictions on right of search, 118  
 Cope, General, defeated by Pretender, 1745, 205  
 Court Martial Law under Georges : Debates and discussions on Consolidating Act, 235 ; Vernon takes part in, 235  
 Covent Garden, its fashionable, literary, and dramatic associations, 20 *et seq.*  
 Coverley, Sir Roger de, and Dr. Busby, 9  
 Cromwell, Oliver, upholds the Flag, 63  
 Cuba, project for capturing, 168 *et seq.* ; General Wentworth's failure, 170  
 Culloden, battle of, 206  
 Cumberland, Duke of, "Billy the Butcher," 206 ; Marshal Saxe's opinion of, 241

## D

Darien, Scots Settlement in Isthmus of, 87  
 Darlington, Countess of, nicknamed "the Elephant," 95  
 Defoe, Daniel, and his "Essay on Projects," 75 ; plan for registration of seamen, 75 *et*

*seq.* ; the writing of "Robinson Crusoe," 86  
 Delgarno, Captain, gallant fight against Barbary pirates, 98  
 Derby, Lord, and the London mob outside Almack's, 246  
 "Dictionary of National Biography," article on Vernon, 277  
 Dieppe, attack on, 31  
 Dilke, Admiral, at battle of Malaga, 51  
 Discipline in the Navy of eighteenth century, 231  
 Dodd, Captain, captured by French, 203  
 Duchesses, the, at Whitehall, 22 ; Evelyn's disgust, 22  
 Dunkirk, attack on by Shovel, 32  
 Dunwich, Vernon elected member of Parliament for, 104

## E

Edinburgh, Freedom of presented to Vernon, 281  
 "Elephant," the, a royal favourite, 95  
 Entick's "Naval History" dedicated to Vernon, 269  
 Evelyn, John, and King Charles' spaniels, 22 ; his impressions of the Court, 23 ; at Portsmouth, 23 ; and Greenwich Hospital, 26 ; on trial of Strafford, 26

## F

Finchley Common, camp on, 1745, 204  
 Fisher, Sir John, maintains Nelson traditions, anticipated by Vernon, 217

Flag, etiquette of the, 62 ; salutation of by foreign fleets, 63 ; colours of, 64  
 Fleet Prison, Vernon member of Committee to inquire into abuses, 112  
 Florida, question as to boundaries, 119  
 Foster, Sir Michael, on legality of "press-gang," 77 ; statutes and cases in relation to press-gang, 77 *et seq.*  
 Fox, Charles, and the London mob, 246  
 Fox, Henry, and the war with France, 220 ; his correspondence with French Foreign Secretary in 1756, 220 *et seq.*  
 Fox-Bourne's criticism of Smollett, 273  
 French, renewed expectation of invasion by, 1755, 219 ; aggression in the Mediterranean, 220 ; diplomatic correspondence, 220 ; object of, 220 ; English vessels seized, 220 ; French preparations, 221  
 French Fleet sails for Minorca, 224  
 French preparation for invasion, 219 *et seq.*

## G

*Gentleman's Magazine*, Parliamentary reports, 122  
 George, the "little," old Royal yacht, 196  
 George, Prince of Denmark, made Lord High Admiral, 37 ; death of, 1708, 85  
 George I. arrives in England, 95 ; violent measures of new Ministers, 96 ; visits to Han-

over, 106 ; a royal marriage, 108 ; death of, 108 ; Duchess of Kendal and the raven, 108  
 George II., characteristics of, 130 ; his preference for Hanover, 130 ; visits to Herrenhausen, 130 ; his appreciation of "Richard III.," 130 ; ignorance of English idioms, 131  
 Georgia claimed by Spain, 117 ; Royal Charter granted, 119 ; first emigrants in, 119  
 George III., visit to Portsmouth, 195  
 Germaine, Lord George, his unpopularity, 246  
 Gibraltar, siege of, 49 ; Vernon present, 49  
 Godolphin, Earl of, 81  
 Gonzales, Don Manoel, impressions of London, 18 *et seq.*  
 Gordon, Sir William, 147  
 Greenwich Hospital, foundation of, 25  
 "Grenville Correspondence," 239  
 Guarda Costas, outrages off Spanish Main, 116  
 Guise, General, 168

## H

Haddock, Admiral, expedition to coast of Spain, 120, 200  
 Hanover, the Treaty of, 106  
 Hanoverian mercenaries in England, 174, 222  
 Hardy, Captain, obtains intelligence of Spanish Fleet at Lagos Bay, 39 ; battle of Vigo, 40 *et seq.*  
 Harley, Robert, *see* Earl of Oxford

Hawke, Sir Edward, 222 ; superseded Byng, 226, 243  
 Hawley, General (nicknamed "Hangman"), Governor of Portsmouth, 242  
 Hedges, Sir Charles, 21  
 Herbert, Admiral, created Earl of Torrington, 12 ; court martial, 13  
 Herbert, Captain, under Vernon at Porto-Bello, 134  
 Herring fishery, Vernon's interest in, 280  
 Hesse, Prince of, at Gibraltar, 49  
 Hessian troops in England, 174, 222 ; the British soldier of that period, 223 *et seq.* ; comparison between British and Hessian, 223  
 Hopson, Admiral, Vernon serves under at Vigo, 41 ; knighted, 44  
 Hopson, General, Walpole's opinion of, 242  
 Hosier, Admiral, story of his West Indian expedition, 140 ; the Admiral's "Ghost," 141  
 Howe, Lord, as a naval commander, 196 ; victorious return to Portsmouth, 196, 243  
 Hume and Smollett, extract on Vernon and Sir Robert Walpole, 123

I

Iberville, Monsieur, descent upon Charlestown, 90  
 Impressing of seamen, legality of, 248 ; Vernon's disapproval, 248 *et seq.*

Insurance and pension for seamen, 252 ; a vanishing fund, 252  
 Invasion expected in 1745, 202  
 Ipswich, Vernon member for 174

J

James II., preparations for invasion by French in 1696, 45 ; dies in exile, 80  
 Jenkins, Captain, mutilated by Spaniards, 116 *et seq.*  
 Jennings, Sir John, Vernon serves under, 97  
 John, King, his ordinances concerning honour to the Flag, 63  
 Johnson, Samuel, and Old London, 21  
 Johnston, Sir Henry, Governor of Charlestown, defence against French attack, 90

K

Kendal, Duchess of, nicknamed "Maypole," 95 ; and the raven, 108  
 Kent, Vernon's plan of defending coast, 207-212  
 Keppel, Sir Augustus, his trial by court martial, 244 ; receives Freedom of London, 246  
 Keppel, Admiral Sir Harry, and seamen's pig-tails, 216  
 Kidd, Captain, Commission under the Great Seal, 88 ; his daring piracies, 88 ; seized and sent to England, 88 ; trial and execution, 89, 90 ; debates in Parliament concerning, 89

Kirkby, Captain, shot at Spithead for treachery, 33  
 Königsmarck, lover of Princess Sophia, his fate, 108

## L

La Hogue, battle of, 6, 14 ;  
 Admiral Russell's dispatch, 14  
 Law and the Mississippi Scheme, 104  
 Leake, Sir John, at Malaga, 51 ; succeeds Sir Cloudesley Shovel, 74 ; sketch of his character, 74  
 Lestock, Commodore, 150, 214  
 London, impressions of, by "Don Manoel Gonzales," 18 *et seq.* ; rejoicings at Vernon's achievements in West Indies, 173 ; Freedom of, presented to Vernon, 173  
*London Magazine*, lines in praise of Vernon, 280  
 Loudon, Lord, likened to "St. George" on the signs, 241

## M

Macaulay, on English officers of Stuart period, 240  
 Macclesfield, Lord Chancellor's defalcations, impeachment of, 105  
 Madrid, Treaty of, 120 ; disputes resulting from, 120  
 Malaga, battle of, Vernon takes part in, 51 *et seq.*  
 Mar, Earl of, rising under, 97  
 Marines, Royal, origin of, 50  
 Marlborough, Duchess of, and Queen Anne, 35, 36 ; receives present from King of Spain, 84

Marlborough, Duke of, despatched to Holland, 36, 81 ; on arrival of George I., 95  
 Martin, Vice-Admiral, Vernon's letter to, 261  
*Marye Rose*, the wreck of at Spithead, 179, 180  
 Matthews, Admiral, 202-214  
 Mayne, Captain, under Vernon, at Porto-Bello, 134  
 "Maypole," the, afterwards Duchess of Kendal, a royal favourite, 95  
 "Mean expedients" of the Walpole Ministry, 128  
 Medals struck in Vernon's honour, 142, 143  
 Merchant Shipping Act, 1854, effect of, 250  
 Metternich Prince, at Portsmouth, 196  
 Midshipmen, in the reign of Queen Anne, 27 ; naval duties and orders, 27  
 Minns, Sir Christopher, 4  
*Monitor*, the, edited by Entick, extract from, 272  
 Monk, General, 4  
 Morley, John, on Sir Robert Walpole, 146, 148  
 Mortality in the old Navy, 218  
 "Mount Vernon," the Washington property, so named after the Admiral, 167  
 Munden, Sir John, expedition under, 37 ; trial by court martial, 38

## N

Narborough, Sir John, 4  
 National finance, inquiry into



state of, under George I., 104  
*et seq.*; heated debates on,  
 105; impeachment of Lord  
 Chancellor, 105  
 Naval engagements under old  
 system, 64 *et seq.*  
 Naval inquiry in House of  
 Commons: seamen's wages in  
 arrears, 15  
 Naval law and punishment, 230  
 Naval mutinies and how they  
 were caused, 253 *et seq.*  
 Navigation Acts, series of enact-  
 ments bearing on fiscal prob-  
 lems, 250  
 Navigation treaties, relating to  
 West Indies, 118; Spanish  
 breach of same, 119, *et seq.*  
 "Naval History," Entick's  
 dedication to Vernon, 269  
 Navy Debt under George I.,  
 104  
 Navy, the, under William III.,  
 5; inquiry as to irregularities,  
 97; Lord Chesterfield's ver-  
 dict, 284  
 Nelson and Portsmouth, 187  
*et seq.*  
 Nelson traditions, Vernon an-  
 ticipates, 217; Sir John  
 Fisher maintains, 217  
 Newcastle, Duke of, ignorant  
 of geography, 279  
 Newton, Sir Isaac, instructs  
 Vernon, 17  
 Nore, mutiny at, 254  
 Norris, Sir John, Vernon serves  
 under, 61, 97; expedition to  
 Baltic against Russia, 102,  
 202  
 "North" Briton, Wilkes and,  
 274  
 Nottingham, Earl of, letter on  
 Beachy Head defeat, 12

O

Officers, English, after death of  
 Marlborough, 240 *et seq.*  
 Ogle, Captain (afterwards Sir  
 Chaloner Ogle), destroys  
 squadron of Roberts, the  
 pirate, 102; reinforces Vernon,  
 149; at Carthage, 154, 168,  
 200  
 "Old Grog," the nickname ex-  
 plained, 216  
 Onslow, Speaker of House of  
 Commons, and the Press, 122  
 Orwell, Lord, the Admiral's  
 nephew, 266; places me-  
 morial in Westminster Abbey,  
 266  
 Osborne, Commodore, 203, 222  
 "Oxford" (Earl of), Robert  
 Harley, the Tory Leader, and  
 his intrigues, 80, 81, 95

P

Palliser, Sir Hugh, witness  
 against Keppel on his court  
 martial, 244; his unpopularity,  
 245 *et seq.*  
 Panama, Wentworth's abortive  
 scheme for descent on, 171  
 Parker, Sir Peter, and the Spit-  
 head mutiny, 254; the sea-  
 men's demands, 254  
 Pelham, Lord, 175  
 Pembroke, Earl of, succeeds  
 Prince of Denmark as Lord  
 High Admiral, 86  
 Penryn, Vernon elected M.P.  
 for, 104  
 Pepys, the "Diary," 2; report  
 on condition of Navy, 1684,  
 4; and Lord Brouncker, 20;  
 at Portsmouth with Evelyn,



- 23 ; and bribery, 24 ; and the sailors ashore, 24 ; and the Navy under the Stuarts, 24, 25
- Peterborough, Lord, 174
- Peter the Great visits England, 59 *et seq.* ; in command of united fleets, 97 ; at Deptford, 60
- Pirates in West Indies, 99 ; Roberts, the pirate, his squadron destroyed by Captain Ogle, 102 ; Taylor, the pirate, and Spanish Governor of Porto-Bello, 103
- Pitt, attack on Walpole, and subsequent fall of Ministry, 145 *et seq.*, 175
- Pope and his satire, Atossa, 35
- Porto-Bello, description of, 133 ; regarded as impregnable, 133 ; arrival of British squadron, 134 ; details of bombardment, 134 *et seq.* ; landing effected, 135 ; Spaniards driven out of forts, 135 ; capitulation proposed, 136 ; articles arranged, 136 ; forts occupied, 137 ; Spanish warships surrender, 137 ; release of British prisoners secured, 137 ; address in Parliament on the victory, 137 ; thanks of both Houses voted to Vernon, 138 ; important results of capture, 139 *et seq.*
- Portsmouth, historical incidents and personages in connection with, 176-197 ; naval history of, 176 *et seq.* ; Royal visits to, 177 *et seq.* ; siege of by Parliamentary forces, 182 ; the Duchess of, 185 ; old inns, scene of Nelson's last embarkation, 186 *et seq.* ; Vernon elected member for, without his knowledge, 189 ; description of in Vernon's time, 197
- Prado, Convention of, 116, 120
- Press-gang, the oppressions of, 45 ; statutes and cases in relation to legality of, 77 *et seq.* ; exemptions from impressment, 78 ; *Naval Chronicle* on, 250
- Pretender, the Old, 80 ; the Young, lands in Scotland, 1745, 203
- Princess Sophia, wife of George I., 108
- Privateering, Vernon's objections to, 256
- Pulteney and the Press reporters, 122 ; attack on the Ministry, 127 ; extract from speech in Parliament, 128 ; "mean expedients" of the Ministry, 128 ; attack on Walpole and subsequent fall of Ministry, 145 *et seq.* ; a failure in office, 174

## Q

- Quadruple Alliance, the, 101 ; King of Spain accedes to, 101
- Queen Anne, death of, 93 ; origin of expression "Is Queen Anne's dead," 93

## R

- Renton, captain under Vernon at Porto-Bello, 134
- Richard I., naval proclamation by, 230

Richelieu, Marshal, Blakeney makes terms with, 226  
 Roberts, the Pirate, and Captain Ogle, 102  
 "Roderick Random," account of attack on Carthage, 157 *et seq.*  
 Rodney, serves under Vernon in the Downs, 210  
 Rogers, Captain Woodes, cruise in the South Seas, 86  
 Rooke, Sir George, 5, 7, 30, 37, 38; battle of Malaga, 51 *et seq.*; his achievements, 54 *et seq.*; hostile criticism in Parliament, 56; buried in Canterbury Cathedral, 57; etiquette of the Flag, 62, 71, 243; conveys King of Spain to Lisbon, 84; receives presents from, 85  
 Rouilli, Monsieur, French Foreign Secretary in 1756, 220; his correspondence with Fox, 220 *et seq.*  
 Royal nomenclature for battle-ships, 111  
*Royal Sovereign*, destruction of by fire, 45  
 Russell, Admiral, 6  
 Russia oppresses Swedes, 101; expedition to Baltic under Sir John Norris, 102; peace between Russia and Sweden, 102  
 Ryswick, Treaty of, 46; terms of, 48

S

St. Malo, bombardment of, by Benbow, 31  
 St. John, Henry, *see* Lord Bolingbroke

Sailors and the play, 192  
 Sailor's dress in the Georgian Navy, 223  
 Salutation at sea, British traditions, 63  
 Saxe, Marshal, his military talents, 241; his opinion of Duke of Cumberland, 241  
 Scilly Islands, Admiral Shovel wrecked, Vernon escapes, 72  
 Seamen's old-age pensions, 252  
 "Seasonable Advice from an Honest Sailor," 296, 307  
 Shipbuilding, Vernon's views on, 286  
 Shovel, Admiral Sir Cloudesley, 4; knighted, 11; at Dunkirk, 32, 37; at Malaga, 51 *et seq.*; and etiquette of the Flag, 62-71; perishes in storm of 1707, 72; re-interred in Westminster Abbey, 73; Queen Anne's tribute to his memory, 74, 243  
 Smith, Vice-Admiral, President of court martial on Byng, gives evidence at Bar of Commons, 232  
 Smollett, reasons for his hostility, 165, 276, 277; as physician at Bath, 275; his quarrel with Garrick, 276; Laurence Sterne nicknames him "Smelfungus," 276  
 Smugglers at Folkestone, Dover, and Deal, 255 *et seq.*  
 Sophia, Princess, wife of George I., 108  
 South Sea Bubble, 104  
 Spain, the King of, visits Queen Anne, 82; expedition against under Byng, 99; Captain Walton destroys section of Spanish squadron, 99; ex-

pedition sent to invade England, 101 ; accedes to Quadruple Alliance, 101 ; bound by a Convention in Prado, 116 ; barbarity to Captain Jenkins and other British sailors, 116 *et seq.* ; Spain and Georgia, 119 ; claims against for seizure of British ships, 119 *et seq.*

Spaniels, King Charles's, in St. James's Park, 22 ; Evelyn's disgust, 22

Spanish cruisers and British shipping, 110, 113

Spithead, mutiny at, 253

Storm, the great, in 1703, immense loss in seamen and ships, 71 *et seq.* ; in 1707, 72

Steele, Richard, and *The Crisis*, 121

Strafford, Earl of, Evelyn's admiration for, 26

Sunderland, Earl of, 21

Sweden, quarrel with, 98

Swift, Jonathan, criticism on Peace of Utrecht, 93, 96

## T

Taylor, the pirate, and the Spanish Governor of Porto Bello, 103

*Temeraire*, mutiny on, 255 ; mutineer's last words, 255

Thackeray on battle of Vigo, 43, 95 ; on Queen Anne's reign, 345

Thomson's "Seasons," reference to Vernon, 164

Torrington, Lord, disgraced, 13

Trelawny, Governor, and the Vernon expedition, 168

Tyrawley, Lord, letter to Fox on Gibraltar and English prejudices, 238

## U

Utrecht, Peace of, 93 ; Jonathan Swift's criticism, 93

## V

Van Tromp and the British Flag, 63

Vernon, Edward, birth of, 2 ; at Westminster School, 7 ; and the old sailors in Westminster, 16 ; nicknamed "The Admiral" when a schoolboy, 16 ; enters Queen Anne's Navy, 27 ; midshipmen in Vernon's time, 27 *et seq.* ; baptism of fire at Vigo, 42 ; recommended to Admiralty, 42 ; earlier cruises in the West Indies, 48 ; receives presents from King of Spain, 49, 85 ; present at capture of Gibraltar, 49 ; at battle of Malaga, 52 ; receives present from Queen Anne, 58 ; services in the Baltic, 61 ; his ship, the *Phoenix*, wrecked in great storm of 1707, 72 ; serves under Commodore Wager in West Indies, 91 ; under Norris in expedition to Baltic, 1720, 102 ; in Parliament, 104 ; expedition to Baltic under Wager, 107 ; serves under Wager before Gibraltar, 110 ; re-elected for Penryn, 110 ; takes part in inquiry into Fleet Prison abuses, 112 ; Vernon and Sir Robert

Walpole, 113; advice on conduct of war with Spain, 113; urges that Porto-Bello should be captured, 118-124; summoned to attend Admiralty Board, 121; Smollett's comments in his History, 123; appointed Vice-Admiral of the Blue, 124; appointed Commander-in-Chief of West Indian squadron, 124; attends the King at St. James's Palace, 125; terms of commission, 125; squadron equipped at Portsmouth, 125; squadron sails from Spithead, 125; his orders for training the seamen, 125; his instructions to his captains, 125; no marines provided by Admiralty, 126; his complaint to Duke of Newcastle, 126, 127; urges importance of superiority at sea, 126; no support given by Ministry, 127; risks of encountering the Ferrol Fleet, 127; his squadron arrives at Port Royal, 129; his zeal and loyalty, 130; his total strength in Porto-Bello expedition, 132; bombards and captures Porto-Bello, 133 *et seq.*; address in Parliament on victory, 137; thanks of both Houses voted to Vernon, 138; important results of capture of Porto-Bello, 139 *et seq.*; reply to Spanish Governor, 139; letter to Sir Charles Wager, 139; voted Freedom of London, 141; medals struck in his honour, *see* note to pp. 141-2; his popularity in Parliament and our colonies,

142; Government hostility, 142; Lord Chesterfield on Admiral Vernon, 142; public rejoicings on Porto-Bello victory, 143; the family motto, 143; Lord Bathurst's motion in House of Lords, 144; kept waiting for necessary ships and fresh stores, 144; address to King to remove Walpole, 145; great debate in Commons, 145 *et seq.*; reinforced by fleet under Sir Chaloner Ogle, 149; their opportune arrival, 150; French abandon projected attack on Jamaica, 151; attacks Carthage, 152 *et seq.*; enthusiasm in London, 155; Wentworth's procrastination, 156; his difficulties at Carthage, 156-7; Smollett's references in "Roderick Random," 157 *et seq.*; Spanish ships taken and sunk, 158; fever rages throughout fleet, 162; Vernon's letter describing situation, 163; reference to Vernon in Thomson's "Seasons," 164; and Lawrence and George Washington, 166 *et seq.*; Washington's home named after Vernon, 167; Archbishop of Canterbury plants tree at Mount Vernon in 1904, 168; Council of War held, 168; decision to attack Cuba, 168; General Wentworth's failure, 171; captures by English Fleet, 171; projected attack on Panama abandoned, 172; his request to Government to be dissociated from General Wentworth, 172; relieved of

command with General Wentworth, 172 ; returns to England, 173 ; received by King, 173 ; Freedom of London presented to, 173 ; member for Ipswich, 174 ; supports Opposition, 174 ; association with Portsmouth Town and Harbour, 176 ; elected member for Portsmouth without his knowledge, 189 ; Washington and Wolfe in their boyhood and Vernon, 191 ; completes forty years' service, 198 ; his trenchant criticism, 199 ; and plans for Royal Dockyards, 199 ; as naval reformer, 199 ; "My Lords" offended and Vernon's name removed from Navy List, 200 ; junior officers advanced and Vernon slighted, 200 ; takes part in debate on Courts Martial, 200 ; slighted by the Admiralty—his protest, 201 ; reinstated by next Government, 201 ; his attack on Lord Winchelsea, 201 ; Duke of Bedford restores Vernon's name to Navy List, 201 ; appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Downs, 1745, 202 ; provided with insufficient squadron, 206 ; checkmates the French, 206 *et seq.* ; his plan of coast defence, 207, 212 ; captures by his ships, 208 ; "hunted out of his command," 209 ; Entick's comments on, 209 ; Horace Walpole's tribute, 210 ; injustice of historians to, 210–212 ; Vernon and the captains of the privateers, 213 ; strikes

his flag in 1746, 214 ; justifies his action as Commander-in-Chief, 214 ; zeal for welfare of the sailors, 217 *et seq.* ; explanation of nickname "Old Grog," 216 ; his personal appearance, 216 ; his character, 216, 217 ; anticipates Nelson traditions, 217 ; scare of French invasion in 1755, 219 ; takes vigorous part in debates on Consolidating Act, 235 ; misrepresentation of Vernon's conduct, 247 ; his defence and pamphlets, 247 *et seq.* ; condemns system of press-gang, 248 *et seq.* ; old-age pensions for seamen, 252 ; on naval mutineers, 253 *et seq.* ; on smuggling at Dover, Deal, Ramsgate, and Folkestone, 255 ; on privateering, 256 ; Vernon's second pamphlet, 256 *et seq.* ; churchwardens as coastguards, 257 ; resignation of his command, 257 ; false report of his removal, 257 ; "A Specimen of Naked Truth from a British Sailor," 258–261 ; letter to John Norris, 261 ; letter to Vice-Admiral Martin, 263 ; letter to Secretary of the Admiralty, 263 ; called before Admiralty Board, 264 ; his name struck off list of Flag Officers, 265 ; tribute to his memory by his nephew, Lord Orwell, 266 ; lines of unknown authorship on Vernon, 279 ; publicly thanked by Duke of Beaufort for Parliamentary services, 280 ; lines from *London Magazine*, 280 ; family losses,



- 282 ; Royal neglect of his claims, 282 ; fatal illness, 285 ; his death, 285
- Vernon, James, the Right Honourable, the Admiral's father, 2 ; elected M.P. for Westminster, 3 ; on the death of Dr. Busby, 10 ; goes out of office on death of William III., 81
- Vigo, attack on, 40 ; Vernon's baptism of fire, 41 ; Thackeray's account in "Esmond," 43
- W
- Wade, Captain, shot at Spithead, 33
- Wade, Field-Marshal, and the Scottish rebels, 205 *et seq.*
- Wager, Sir Charles, in the Baltic, 61, 106 ; expedition to West Indies, 90 ; Vernon, captain of *Jersey*, 91 ; before Gibraltar, 110, 147 ; Vernon's letter to, 139
- Walpole, Horace, on Sir Robert Walpole, 146 ; reference to Blakeney, 240 ; description of Hawke and Howe, 243
- Walpole, Sir Robert, succeeds Henry St. John (Lord Bolingbroke) as Secretary for War, 81, 105 ; his excise scheme, 111 ; and Vernon, 113 ; and foreign subsidies, 115 ; summons Admiralty Board, 121 ; hostility to Cave's publication of Parliamentary Reports, 122 ; Sir Robert and the Press, 122 ; "Waleup" M.P., Walpole reported as, 122 ; address to King for his removal, 145 ; Sir Robert and the House of Commons, 145 ; popular excitement, 146 ; his rise in Parliament, 146 ; his definition of a "patriot," 146 ; great debate in House of Commons, 146 *et seq.* ; Mr. John Morley's biography of, 146 ; earlier biography, 148 *et seq.* ; was he a traitor to King George ? 148 ; fall of, 149 ; attributed to Vernon's success, 149 ; created Earl of Orford, 149 ; death of, 149 ; Walton, Captain, his business-like despatch after destroying section of Spanish squadron, 99
- Washington, Lawrence, and Admiral Vernon, 166 ; proposes that George Washington should enter British Navy, 166 ; estate named after Vernon, 167
- Washington, George, on point of becoming a midshipman, 167 ; Mrs. Washington objects to his going to sea, 167
- Westminster Abbey, monument to Vernon's memory, 266
- Westminster School, its famous scholars, 8
- Wentworth, General, 150 ; his vacillation, 155 ; Vernon's disgust with, 156, 168 ; his failure at Cuba, 171 ; Vernon's request to Government to be dissociated from him, 172
- William III. in an open boat, 14 ; and Admiral Rooke, 55
- Wilmington, Lord, Walpole's successor, 174
- Winchelsea, Lord, Vernon's attack on, 201



## 322 ADMIRAL VERNON AND THE NAVY

- Winnington, Sir Thomas, and the "Press gallery," 122
- Wolfe, James, Wright's life of, quotes Vernon, 141, 142 ; volunteers to join expedition to Spanish America, 189 ; illness prevents his sailing, 190 ; his father acts as adjutant-general, 190 ; his letters to his family, 189, 191, 193 ; his opinion of Portsmouth people, 191 ; body landed at Portsmouth, 194 ; his mother's appeal to the Government after his death, 195 ; his comment on Byng's failure, 237, 239
- Wolfe, Colonel, father of General Wolfe, 190 ; letter from his son, 193
- Woodes, Rogers, expedition of, 86 ; rescues Alexander Selkirk, 86 ; Daniel Defoe and "Robinson Crusoe," 86
- Wren, Sir Christopher, 26
- Wright's Life of Wolfe, notes on Vernon, 141, 142
- Wyndham, Sir William, and the Navy accounts, 117, 174

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